

# socialist review

Issue 29

For a democratic and socialist alternative

July 2009

## FIGHT RECESSION

### Raise the minimum wage



**Recession**      **Prison**      **Israel**  
**war on workers**      **racist justice**      **an apartheid state**

# WHERE WE STAND

## **Socialism**

Capitalism is a system of crisis, exploitation and war in which production is for profit, not human need. Although workers create society's wealth, they have no control over its production or distribution. A new society can only be built when workers collectively seize control of that wealth and create a new state in which they will make the decisions about the economy, social life and the environment.

## **Workers' Power**

Only the working class has the power to create a society free from exploitation, oppression and want. Liberation can be won only through the struggles of workers themselves, organised independently of all other classes and fighting for real workers' power - a new kind of state based on democratically elected workers' councils. China and Cuba, like the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, have nothing to do with socialism. They are repressive state capitalist regimes. We support the struggles of workers against every ruling class.

## **Revolution Not Reformism**

Despite the myth of parliamentary democracy, the structures of parliament, the army, the police and the judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class majority. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against workers. There is no parliamentary road to socialism.

## **Internationalism**

Workers in every country are exploited by capitalism, so the struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We oppose everything that divides workers of different countries. We oppose all immigration controls. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries. We oppose imperialism and support all genuine national liberation struggles.

## **Liberation From Oppression**

We fight for democratic rights. We are opposed to the oppression of women, Maori, Pacific Islanders, gays and lesbians. These forms of oppression are used to divide the working class. We support the right of all oppressed

groups to organise for their own defence. All these forms of liberation are essential to socialism and impossible without it.

## **Tino Rangatiratanga**

We support the struggle for tino rangatiratanga. Maori capitalists and politicians have no interest in achieving tino rangatiratanga for working class Maori. The Government and corporate warriors' approach to Treaty claims has benefited a Maori elite while doing little for working class Maori. Tino rangatiratanga cannot be achieved within capitalism. It will only become a reality with the establishment of a workers' state and socialist society.

## **Revolutionary Organisation**

To achieve socialism, the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party. Such a party can only be built by day-to-day activity in the mass organisations of the working class. We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests. We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions. We are beginning to build such a party, linking the ideas of revolutionary socialism to workers' struggles against the system. If you agree with our ideas and want to fight for socialism, we urge you to join us.

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## **GET INVOLVED!**

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# A voice for working people

**Socialist Review is a magazine for working people. We don't pretend - like the corporate media - to be unbiased.**

They claim to speak for the "general public" but at the end of the day they represent the views of their advertisers and owners. This is a deception and the coverage of the recession makes that clear. We are not "all in this together".

Most people are working longer hours but despite this what was taken for granted 25 years ago, like a house and a decent retirement, is now a struggle to afford.

Our bosses on the other hand are rolling in dough. The National Business Review had to double the entry level to its Rich List from \$25 million to \$50 million because being a parasite has never paid so well. And then the media tells us we are all in this together, that the recession hurts all of us equally, even that we are to blame for borrowing too much and living beyond our means. The nerve of it.

Household debt has skyrocketed even as government debt declined. All that was achieved by 25 years of neo-liberal "balancing the books" has been a shift of the debt load onto the shoulders of individuals and off the ample back of business. Labour's lightening of the student loan load has only served to entrench an inequitable system.

## Illusions of growth

The appearance of rising living standards is maintained in illusory ways. Firstly, the housing bubble: This was greeted with mindless euphoria by the media and market commentators. The system seemed to be working beyond their wildest dreams as tens of thousands of dollars of fake value were added to ordinary suburban homes. Many young people were priced out of the market and homeowners bullied or tempted into remortgaging wildly and plunging deep into debt. In hindsight, the media remember their morals and lecture us on the sin of greed and the virtue of hard work.

Secondly, overwork: Where once the 40-hour

week was the norm and provided a living wage for a family, now one-income families are increasingly rare. The capitalist system has perverted the demands of the women's liberation movement - women are increasingly expected to work and keep the house as well.

Thirdly - cheap imports: The removal of many trade tariffs decimated manufacturing as cheap second-hand motor cars and electronic goods flooded in from East Asia. Shoes, cars and stereos may be cheaper than ever but this wealth is based on the misery of millions in low-wage economies, and the decimation of local industry.

## Recession

Now as capitalism enters yet another crisis, we are expected to tighten our belts once more. NZ is yet to feel the worst of it but already the bosses have pulled out the knives to slash wages, conditions and of course jobs. We detail some of the losses from the first half of the year on the following page. Every job loss is a disaster for the families affected but it is also an attack on your wages and conditions. As unemployment rises the pool of poor and desperate pushes job security out onto the street. The recession is a disaster for workers and the bosses who go under, but the boosters of the system are quick to point to the advantages to the companies that survive, as our bargaining power is undermined and opportunities to buy up bankrupt businesses and laid-off workers increase.

## Social wage

It's not just in your pay packet that you will feel the pinch. National is preparing to pare back the public service - to hack away at health and squeeze education. Not that Labour would have done any different if they were faced with this dilemma. Even in the boom years while profits soared, the privatisation of education continued apace. School fees were normalised and student fees rose year on year. The "social wage" includes roads, rail, TV, radio, parking, libraries, galleries, buses, parks and so much more. Freely available facilities and services save working people thousands every year. Tax ensures businesses pay a share of the load. Cutbacks on

the social wage are attacks on the living standards of all.

## Prisons

One part of public spending seemingly immune to cuts is the prison system. On this point, prudent economists and fiscal conservatives suffer sudden fits of generosity. An ideology of punishment and a worship of "law and order" blinds businessmen and politicians to reality and costs. Because prisons do not cut crime. If anything they provide an environment for it to breed. The prison population is growing fast. It is foolishness to think there is a limited number of criminals you can imprison and solve crime once and for all. Our "law and order" ideology pretends to provide security for the majority but this is yet another illusion. When desperation rises, so does reaction - the racist, sexist, homophobic bile that sits half-digested, close to the heart of the capitalist system. The prison population provides a handy enemy of the people but social dislocation creates the homes where evil becomes real. Instead of solving the problem we are taught to fear the symptom.

## Fight recession - raise the minimum wage

We are not helpless in the face of the recession, layoffs and state repression. The aim of Socialist Review and the International Socialist Organisation is to build a political party to replace Labour, to build a party that genuinely represents the working class majority. In this magazine we aim to provide reliable information on issues confronting workers and students and ideas to change the world. We also support protests and campaigns to improve our living standards. The Unite trade union campaign for a living wage, which aims to raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour is a pro-active response to the economic conditions facing workers. We need to raise our expectations, not lower them. If you agree with this aim, then sign the Unite petition, take out a subscription to this magazine - now only \$5 for three issues - or better yet, join the ISO!

Mike Tait

# Unite's campaign for a living wage

The Unite trade union has launched a campaign that aims to get an immediate rise in the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, and then to have it set at two-thirds of the average wage. The first part of the campaign is to collect over 300,000 signatures within the next 12 months on our Citizen's Initiated Referendum Petition. Currently 450,000 New Zealanders live on less than \$15 an hour and more than 100,000 live on minimum wage. That's not enough to live in. It's no wonder that the 30% of New Zealanders on the lowest incomes in 2004 were worse off in real dollars than they were 20 years ago. Meanwhile corporate profits increased 11% a year from 2000-2004 and the wealthiest 10% of the population are 21% better off than they were 20 years ago. Between 2006 and 2007 Unite ran a campaign that changed the face of low-paid work in New Zealand - SuperSizeMyPay.Com. Unite pressured the Government into raising the minimum wage to \$12 an hour and into eradicating youth rates for most of the workforce. Unite built a movement around worker's rights among young people and students for the first time in our generation. This time round Unite want to get rid of poverty wages completely and to build a movement of young people committed to getting living wages for New Zealand lowest paid but hardest working workers. It's no wonder youth are flocking across the ditch when the Australian minimum wage is almost NZ\$18. This contributes to one in five New Zealand children being raised in poverty - a higher rate than in all but three of the world's 26 rich nations.

To download a petition or find out more visit [www.unite.org.nz](http://www.unite.org.nz)

# Recession and the war on workers

***We've all heard about corporate losses, the plummeting stockmarket and growing bankruptcies, but of course it's not the highly paid executives and corporate millionaires who the recession is hurting the most.***

Since the beginning of the year there has been a growing assault on jobs. Official unemployment in New Zealand has risen in recent months to 5 percent and is forecasted to rise again to 8 percent by the end of 2009.

The year began with redundancies slower in January than in December – 537 as opposed to 1282, although the extent of the crisis was probably hidden by the fact that January is generally a shorter working month than December, many firms taking the first week or two off for summer holidays.

Early on, Telecom set the ball rolling, announcing 37 sackings as it closed its online retail business, Ferrit.

In February, Air New Zealand “freed” its pilots to take short-term (i.e. 1-2 year) contracts with other airlines and reduced their hours, after sacking 200 other employees before Christmas.

Fisher and Paykel announced 430 redundancies at Mosgiel, to take effect later in the year. In February the redundancies were supposed to be ‘voluntary’, but only 80 workers took this up. Later it emerged that redundancy pay would only be available to workers who left on their redundancy date, disadvantaging anyone who might find work elsewhere.

In March the onslaught began in earnest. A survey of small and medium enterprises indicated that 22 per cent of firms intended to make redundancies in the next 6 months, up from 8 per cent last August. The shrinking property market was reflected by 52 redundancies at state-owned valuation company Quotable Value. Sealords cut 130 jobs at its Nelson factory, and another 58 were laid off at nearby Nelson Pine. Workers in textile manufacturing were also hit hard, with the announcement of 60 redundancies at Summit Wool Spinners in Oamaru, with the remaining workers being put on to National’s nine-day fortnight “job-saving” scheme. Clothing manufacturer Pacific Brands moved production to China, costing 38 jobs in Christchurch and 51 in Palmerston North. Workers at Cavalier Bremworth were put on short time, with a union-negotiated deal forcing them to make up the fifth day of each week with their holiday pay.

Christchurch-based jet manufacturer CWF Hamilton announced 28 redundancies in March.

In April, ASB Bank froze pay increases for 3,500 of its 4,500 employees. Those that didn’t receive a zero pay increase were limited to increases of two to three per cent. Fairfax Media, which owns The Dominion Post and The

Press newspapers, announced 70 redundancies in advertising and pre-production as it moved production to ‘regional hubs’.

Cuts began to impact the state sector. Eighty-six of the Ministry for the Environment’s 300 employees lost their jobs after several projects were scrapped, including the carbon-neutral ‘Gov3’ programme and the Bioethics Committee. TVNZ announced 90 planned redundancies and the Inland Revenue Department warned it would force redundancies if not enough volunteers were found to slash 230 cuts. Cadbury announced a further 45 jobs were to go in addition to the 145 announced in August 2008.

In May the onslaught became a landslide. More than 1500 jobs were lost in the first two weeks.

In a single ‘black week’, hundreds of redundancies were announced: 144 call centre workers are to be cut by Yellow Group contractor TelTech as it moved its operations to a ‘centre of excellence’ in the Philippines; Ports of Auckland laid off 28 staff; 26 further cuts were made at Cadburys, 60 were lost from the Otautau sawmill and 200 in ‘efficiency savings’ at the besieged Ministry for Social Development, which is responsible for social welfare payments. Ironically, the New Zealand Herald announced the job cuts would help the jobless: Their headline read, “Savings redirected to help jobless in the recession”.

Of the 5913 workers laid off between January 1 and May 27, only 2677 were receiving the MSD redundancy package by mid-May. At the end of the month last Friday, Air New Zealand announced a further 80 cuts.

## Fighting for Jobs

Trade unions have an important role to play in defending workers’ rights and conditions. They potentially have the power in the workplace to demand decent pay and fair treatment, by enabling workers to protest poor conditions by withdrawing the labour that turns the wheels of industry, creates profits and generally makes the world go round.

The role of unions in recession has a big impact on how hard workers are hit – by limiting redundancies, increasing pay and winning compensation.

The ultimate weapon of unions is of course strike action, especially tied to public campaigns – aggressively fighting against layoffs and for high redundancy compensation when they do occur.



Militant action in one workplace can help protect not just jobs in one shop, but raise the bar for negotiations in others.

The Unite union is an excellent example. In the past three years, Unite has combined protests and strike action to organize fast-food and low-paid workers, winning pay increases and better rights at work.

In April, Unite workers at Burger King successfully added a clause to their contracts for redundancy pay in case of store closures – before any redundancies had occurred. This contrasts with the tactic of other unions that focus on limiting redundancies through negotiation. Examples include the Service and Food Workers’ Union (SFWU) at Cadbury and Sealord’s Dunedin plant, and the Engineering, Printing and Manufacturing Union at Fisher & Paykel. In these cases the unions’ acceptance of ‘limited redundancies’ emboldened the employers to announce further redundancies later, and in the case of Fisher & Paykel and Sealord, close down the plants.

## Dead end of protectionism

Relapsing into old-style protectionism is not helpful either. At its worst, it leads to the dead-end of racism by blaming foreign workers for stealing ‘Kiwi’ jobs. This is manifesting in the union movement where (usually temporary) migrant workers are kept on after locals have been laid off. But foreign workers, usually from places worse off than New Zealand, are not to

blame. They didn't cause the recession, or the layoffs that followed. Indeed – they are usually have less job security, and are paid less than New Zealanders with similar skills and experience. If redundancy means returning to poverty in Asia, they not only start with less, but have more to lose. The recession is international, and demands an international solution.

Redundancies should be defeated by strikes. Where this isn't possible, penalty redundancy payments should be levied on employers that close down and move. When firms move to low wage economies, workers in New Zealand should simultaneously fight for their own right to compensation, and also struggle for union rights for workers at the new location. This will raise wages and conditions for all workers worldwide. Workers didn't make the recession, and workers shouldn't be forced to pay, regardless of their race or nationality.

## The State of the Unions

The strength of unions to win better conditions, however, isn't fixed or static. Union membership in New Zealand has fallen since the introduction of the Employment Contracts Act in 1990, which aimed to destroy unions and drive down workers' pay and conditions. Union membership fell from 684,825 people, or 55.7 percent of the workforce in 1989, to 601,118 – 51.7 percent – in 1991. Membership further fell throughout the 1990s until it hit a low of 329,919 in 2001 (22.0 percent of the workforce at the time).

Recently, however, there has been some recovery in membership.

Union membership increased from its 2001 level to 373,117 in 2006 (up approximately 16 percent).

The Statistics New Zealand Survey of Working Life calculated union membership in March 2008 to be 525,500, or 30.1 per cent of labour force.

However, the percentage of the workforce in unions – union density as it's called – is not the sole determinant of the union movement's effectiveness. Structural differences in how the movement is organized also play an important role. This can be seen by contrasting the New Zealand experience with a country renowned for its 'revolutionary' working class movement – France.

In NZ, the Council of Trade Unions with 13 member unions dominates trade union membership. Much of this is concentrated in the biggest unions – the Public Service Association (57,000 members) and Engineering, Printing and Manufacturing Union (50,000 members).

In France, union membership actually accounts for a much lower percentage of employees – about 9 per cent – and is split between several large union confederations.

The largest are the CFDT – the Democratic French Confederation of Labour, a secular split from the old Christian Labour Confederation of France, and the CGT – the General Confederation of Labour, which has been historically aligned with the Communist Party.

Despite this, militant union activity is much more prevalent in France than in New Zealand. Unions were instrumental in the fight to defeat

the CPE – a French law similar to our own 90-day bill that took away the rights of young workers in 2006, through a one-day general strike. Unions also called a national strike against French President Nicolas Sarkozy's 36 billion euro bailout of the banks.

The difference is the precedent established by past struggles. The right for workers to strike is enshrined in the French constitution, while in New Zealand it is rigidly restricted by law. In France, small sections of unionized workers are able to lay the foundations for large strikes and full-scale walkouts. In contrast, here only workers directly involved in wage bargaining may take strike action, and only after attempts at arbitration have failed. Solidarity strikes and political strikes are outlawed.

Both situations are the outcome of struggle. The constitution of France is the result of whole series of uprisings and revolutions dating right back to the original French Revolution of 1789, each round in which workers, organized in unions and political parties, played an important, and at times a decisive role. The more fractured nature of the trade union movement reflected political divisions amongst the unions – for the better part of the 20th century a significant part of the French union movement has been explicitly aligned with the Communist Party. Although the CP were no saints, and frequently worked against the interests of French workers, at key junctures in the class struggle – such as during the Nazi occupation, its members were involved in radical action defending the working class. It provided a political force that was not wholly cemented to Social Democratic reformism and meant the French working class was a force to be reckoned with.

In New Zealand, attempts in the 1990s to defeat the Employment Contracts Act through a general strike were met with a timid response from Labour-aligned union leaderships. Rank-and-file moves from militant workers in the nurses union were thwarted by

bureaucratic manoeuvres from above. The lack of effective opposition in workplaces enabled National to bring in their law, which was used as a tool to bludgeon unions. Some unions subsequently loosened their attachment to the Labour Party, but without a more radical

pro-worker alternative, unionism lost much of the political content that it had. The result was a lack of generalized leadership in the union movement, and a recovery in unionism that is still slower and patchier than it otherwise could be.

What is needed in New Zealand's union movement is the political content that can reinforce and sustain radical action. To strengthen the union movement, we need to build a workers' alternative to the Labour Party. Labour lost the explicit endorsement of the more radical unions, because its agents in the union movement weren't willing to lead a real struggle in the 1990s. Likewise, it lost the election last year because it failed to significantly improve the lot of workers while it was in office. An alternative, however, is unlikely to be built overnight. The majority of unionized workers still more or less agree with Labour's promises of small reforms to society. A workers' party will only be built by engaging with workers when they are struggling – whether it be fighting to keep their jobs, maintain their pay or conditions, or fighting to keep their rights at work from predatory employers.

Building such an alternative is the task of Socialist Review and the International Socialists Organisation. If you agree a militant union movement is what is needed to defend jobs, then this is the best place to get involved.

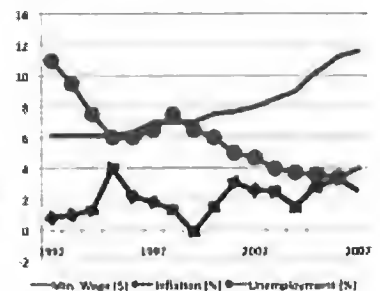
Cory Anderson



## 10 good reasons to sign the petition



- 450,000 are paid less than \$15 an hour.** 100,000 workers are on the minimum wage of \$12.50 an hour. That's not enough to live on.
- 30% of New Zealanders on the lowest incomes in 2004 were actually worse off** in real dollars than they were 20 years ago. The top 10% were 21% better off.
- Profits increased 11% a year from 2000-2004** according to the Reserve Bank. On the other hand the OECD says the average worker only got an increase of **1.7% in the 10 years** from 1995-2005.
- There is no proven link between unemployment and wage increases** according to NZ Treasury research. In fact there is some evidence wage increases actually stimulate the economy.
- Unemployment dropped from 11% to 4% and inflation has stayed low** over the last 25 years, even though the minimum wage doubled from \$6.12 to \$12.50.
- Superannuation was set by Parliament at 66% of the average wage** for a couple because it was seen as fair. Yet the minimum wage for a full-time worker is less than 50%.
- Other state benefits are automatically increased every year** by the inflation rate. Workers have no guarantee. Many get nothing.
- The Labour, Green and Maori parties support \$15 an hour.** So does the Council of Trade Unions.
- The Australian minimum wage is NZ\$17.50.** National says they want pay parity with Australia and that our wages are too low.
- \$15 is a good start.** It's time for a fairer balance between a living wage and a company's profits. After all, there is no business without workers.

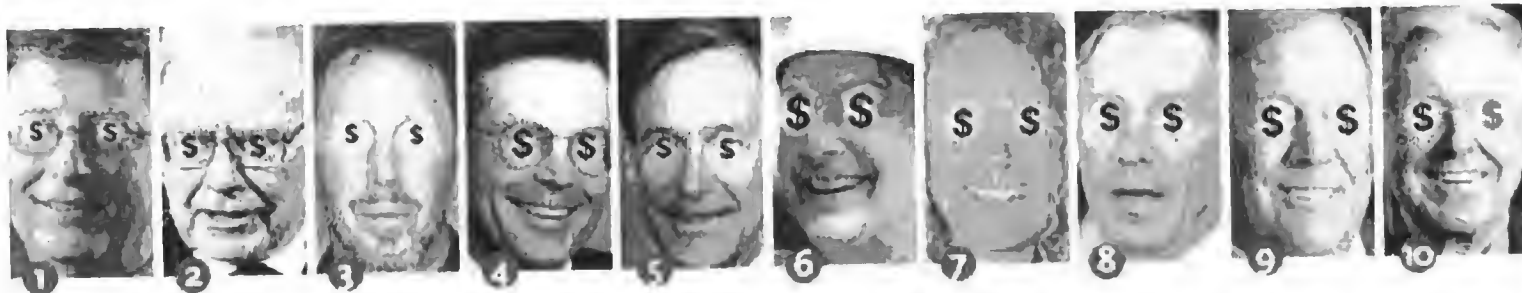


That's why you should sign the petition.

For sources and more information go to: [www.unite.org.nz](http://www.unite.org.nz)



# How the other 0.000000003% lives



**Adam Turl examines the lives of the 10 richest people in the US - and uncovers a rogue's gallery of serial polluters, budget-slashers, CIA contractors, union-busters and right-wing nuts.**

BACK IN February - when even the mainstream media was convinced the capitalist economy was in full-blown meltdown mode - Newsweek magazine ran an article titled "Why there won't be a revolution."

Newsweek wanted to reassure the rich - and convince working people - that the masses weren't getting ready to dust off their pitchforks and head to the town square. "Americans might get angry sometimes," they wrote, "but we don't hate the rich. We prefer to laugh at them."

Newsweek couldn't be more wrong. The 10 percent of Americans who rely on food stamps, the 25 percent of Ohioans who are waiting in lines at food banks, the 500,000 people who lost their jobs last month and the millions more who can't find work - these people aren't laughing.

And plenty of Americans - rightly - hate the rich. While our homes go into foreclosure, while our credit card rates go up, while our jobs disappear and college tuition shoots up, the well-heeled "masters of the universe" on Wall Street are still making out like bandits, but now with hundreds of billions of dollars in taxpayer money, courtesy of the Obama administration.

A lot more people would be even angrier if the mainstream media reported the truth about the rich and powerful in America - who they are and how they "made it" to the top. Consider the 10 richest people in the country as of last September, according to the annual Forbes magazine list.

## Number 10-9

The Koch Brothers

Charles Koch (\$19 billion) and David Koch (\$19 billion)

Studies show that the most likely job of any child is that of their parents. If your mom or dad is a janitor, you're more likely to be a janitor than anything else, according to the statistics.

Charles and David Koch are no exception to

the rule - only much luckier. Like their father, Fred Koch, they run the largest privately owned energy company in the US. Koch Industries - with annual revenues nearing \$100 billion - is also one of the biggest polluters in history.

Fred founded Koch Industries in 1940, and during the Second World War, he made a bundle helping the USSR's ruler Joseph Stalin build up an energy infrastructure in his country. After the war, however, Fred "saw the light" and became one of the founders of the right-wing anti-Communist John Birch Society, which helped whip up a hysteria during the McCarthyite witch-hunts of the 1950s.

When Charles and David took over the family business, they also took over dad's right-wing political projects. The Koch Brothers fund a host of conservative groups through the Koch Family Foundations. They founded the pro-corporate libertarian Cato Institute, and David Koch was the vice-presidential candidate of the Libertarian Party in 1980.

## Number 8

Michael Bloomberg

Net worth: \$20 billion

Before more or less buying the New York City mayor's office (so far, he's spent just under \$150 million on his mayoral campaigns), Michael Bloomberg accrued his fortune by wiring the country's financial system through his software services company. Bloomberg LP's "Market Master" terminals helped make possible the complex computerized trading that became commonplace before the 2008 financial crash.

But the recession has been good to Bloomberg, too. Since 2007, he went from "only" 147th on the list of richest Americans to eighth place.

Bloomberg tries to present the image of a philanthropist and down-to-earth businessman, but his reign has proved to be a disaster for poor and working-class New Yorkers.

He has given millions of dollars to charities in New York City, but the sum is paltry compared to his overall net worth.

As mayor, he's pushed through massive service cuts and layoffs in New York City (even before the onset of the current crisis), closing down day care centers, health clinics and worse. Now, claiming a \$500 million budget shortfall - which he could easily cover himself and still be a multibillionaire - he plans more painful cuts.

In truth, Bloomberg isn't the mayor of the majority of New Yorkers. He's the mayor of moneyed Wall Street interests.

## Number 7-4

The Waltons

Christy Walton (\$23.2 billion), Alice Walton (\$23.2 billion), Sam Robson Walton (\$23.3 billion), Jim Walton (\$23.4 billion)

The Waltons earned their money the old-fashioned way - they inherited it. They struck it rich when papa Sam Walton, founder of the low-wage union-busting Wal-Mart chain, kicked the bucket.

Wal-Mart is the largest corporation in the world - so Sam Walton's heirs are some of the wealthiest people in the world. Walmart has sales approaching \$300 billion a year, revenues larger than Switzerland, more than 5000 stores worldwide, more than 1.5 million workers around the globe, making Wal-Mart the largest private employer in Mexico, Canada and the United States.

Prior to Wal-Mart's rise, labor comprised about 30 percent of total costs for an average retail company. Wal-Mart drove down labor's share to 15 percent. One important way Sam Walton did this was by fostering a corporate culture of messianic opposition to labor unions. Wal-Mart managers are under constant pressure to keep the union out. When unions do get a foothold the company has closed down stores.

Of course, the Walton kids - who are flush with cash and still own more than a third of the company - live the good life. Some enjoy their vast wealth full time, while others have roles in the low-wage retail empire. Sam Walton has been chairman of the company - and daughter Alice is the family's political activist.

In 2004, Alice donated \$2.6 million to the right-wing outfit Progress for America, which ran ads supporting the Iraq War and thanking George W. Bush for supposedly preventing another 9/11-style attack on American soil.

One of Alice's hobbies is horses. Another is reckless driving. In 1996, she was fined \$925 for a DUI. In 1989, she struck and killed a 50-year-old woman in Arkansas. No charges were filed.

## Number 3

Larry Ellison

Net worth: \$27 billion

It's the mid-1970s. There was just a wave of wildcat strikes across the country - and memories of the 1960s are still fresh in everyone's minds.

In San Francisco, Harvey Milk is leading protests for gay rights. Women have won abortion rights with the Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision. The CIA recently aided in overthrowing the government of socialist Salvador Allende in Chile - and bringing to

power the military dictator Gen. Augusto Pinochet.

What would you be doing if you were young back then? Protesting? Organizing a rank-and-file caucus in your union?

Not Larry Ellison. Ellison was networking CIA computer databases for the Ampex Corp. - under the codename "Oracle." In 1977, Ellison formed his own company, and he named it, of all things, Oracle. His first clients were Wright Patterson Air Force Base and the CIA.

Aside from doing IT work for coup-plotters and assassins, Ellison struck it rich by profiting off other people's ideas. The crucial innovation for networking computer databases was actually pioneered by scientists at IBM who couldn't figure out how to make money off their research. Ellison could - and he's been raking in the cash ever since.

But billions of dollars isn't always enough for Larry Ellison's extravagant lifestyle. According to leaked letters and documents from his lawyer, Ellison is regularly maxed out on his billion-dollar credit limit. This, seemingly, is due to his penchant for buying multiple homes and yachts - one yacht cost him \$194 million.

Ellison spends upwards of \$20 million a year on "miscellaneous lifestyle expenses," according to those documents. He lives on a sprawling estate modeled on a traditional Japanese village. For good measure, he also owns an actual villa in Japan (cost: \$25 million).

Not only did Ellison do computer work for the CIA, and not only does he live like a latter-day Nero, but he also might be a "common criminal." In 2001, he was alleged to have dumped 29 million shares of Oracle stock on the basis of insider information - netting \$900 million - just before the stock price fell.

## Number 2

Warren Buffet

Net worth: \$50 billion

Warren Buffet has a reputation - especially after his support for Barack Obama in last year's presidential election - as a liberal billionaire. He's pledged to give 85 percent of his wealth to charity - after he dies, of course. He supports taxes on inheritance and lives in the same Nebraska home he bought in 1958.

But Buffet - born into relative wealth and privilege - isn't really very different from other billionaires.

He grew up the son of a stockbroker and US congressman. By age 11, he was working at his father's brokerage house. By 14, he owned 40 acres of land that he rented out to tenement farmers.

In the 1960s, Buffet bought a textile company - Berkshire Hathaway - and turned it into a holding company, based on the "concept" of buying undervalued stocks and selling them when their values increased. In other words, he built his fortune on speculation.

The company - now Buffet Associates Ltd. - stopped producing textiles long ago, instead investing in insurance outfits like GEICO and AIG, corporations like Coca Cola, and media outlets/military contractors like the Washington Post, ABC and General Electric (which owns NBC).



Larry Ellison's \$200 million yacht the *Rising Sun* moored in Auckland

Buffet's supposed "liberalism" has a lot of limits, both in business and politics. In 2003, he was an economic adviser to the budget-cutting candidate for governor of California, Arnold Schwarzenegger. Buffet once famously quipped, "I'll tell you why I like the cigarette business. It costs a penny to make. Sell it for a dollar. It's addictive. And there's fantastic brand loyalty."

His relatively Spartan lifestyle (for a billionaire, anyway) also has limits. In 1989, he bought a private jet for \$10 million and christened it The Indefensible.

His attitude toward his wealth - for all his supposed philanthropy - is also indefensible:

I don't have a problem with guilt about money. The way I see it is that my money represents an enormous number of claim checks on society. It's like I have these little pieces of paper that I can turn into consumption. If I wanted to, I could hire 10,000 people to do nothing but paint my picture everyday for the rest of my life.

## Number 1

Bill Gates

Net worth: \$52 billion

Bill Gates III is regularly held up as an example of a rich person who actually earned his wealth - the Horatio Alger of computer software. The co-founder of Microsoft, we're told, made his way up from college dropout to running one of the most successful corporations in history through hard work and intelligence. And he then retired to a life of magnanimous and progressive philanthropy.

The only problem with this story is that it's just that - a story.

The modesty of Gates' upbringing is greatly exaggerated. His father was a successful attorney, and his grandfather was the president of a national bank.

While Gates did drop out of Harvard to found Microsoft (thanks to a loan from his family), it wasn't his skills for software development that made him rich, but his "genius" in taking other people's ideas and marketing them. Since effectively cornering the market for PC operating systems, Microsoft's primary goal has been to maintain its predominant position and drive potential competitors out of business.

The mythmaking continues when it comes to Gates' philanthropy. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is widely cited as a symbol of Gates' sense of social responsibility, funding projects to provide health care and AIDS treatment in places like Africa. But a Los Angeles Times investigation in 2007 showed the darker side of the fund.

"[A]t least \$8.7 billion, or 41 percent of its assets, not including US and foreign government securities...have been in companies that countered the foundation's charitable goals or socially concerned philosophy," the Times reported.

For example, the foundation has stock from corporations "ranked among the worst US and Canadian polluters, including ConocoPhillips, Dow Chemical Co. and Tyco International Ltd," wrote the Times. The Gates fund invests in "many of the world's other major polluters, including companies that own an oil refinery and one that owns a paper mill, which a study shows sicken children [in a Nigerian town] while the foundation tries to save their parents from AIDS." Then there's the "pharmaceutical companies that price drugs beyond the reach of AIDS patients the foundation is trying to treat," the Times reported.

Like most rich philanthropists, Gates gives with one hand - and takes far more with the other.

EVEN BEFORE the economic crisis began, inequality had already risen to levels not seen in the US since the eve of the 1930s Great Depression. In the 2000s, family income declined for the first time in decades, while those at the very top became richer and richer.

Ultimately, this wealth came from squeezing it out of the vast majority of people in the US and around the world. The rich became richer by making workers work harder for less.

Now that we're in a severe recession, hourly wages are declining, unemployment is skyrocketing and, without a social safety net, workers are cutting back - not on luxuries like Warren Buffet's private jet, or Larry Ellison's personal armada, but on necessities like food, housing, education and health care.

What should make us most angry is that it doesn't have to be this way. The immense wealth of society doesn't have to be wasted on these parasites. It could be democratically controlled by the working-class people who produced it in the first place, and used to meet human needs.

The good news is that people's attitudes are changing. In early April, for example, a CBS News/New York Times poll showed that 74 percent of Americans favor increasing taxes on the rich. (Revolutionary socialists, of course, favor taxing the rich out of existence).

In the months and years to come, more and more people may be ready to head down to the town square after all - and protest a society of obscene inequality.

# APARTHEID ISRAEL

In 2007, then-prime minister of Israel Ehud Olmert said: "The day will come when the two-state solution collapses and we face a South African-style struggle for equal voting rights. As soon as that happens, the state of Israel is finished. The Jewish organizations, which were our power base in America, will be the first to come out against us, because they will say they cannot support a state that does not support democracy and equal voting rights for all its residents." Israel is a racist state built on the dispossession of the Palestinian people. Everyone opposed to racism and colonialism should support the establishment of one secular democratic state.



## From a dream to disillusionment

In the early 1980s as part of a sojourn overseas I travelled to Israel to work on a kibbutz. I had been inspired to do so by reading accounts of the Jews seeking to obtain a homeland as a haven from persecution. As background I had read the standard histories of the post World War Two period and the biographies of prominent Israeli's such as Golda Meir, Ben Gurion and Moshe Dayan. I was also inspired to try the collective lifestyle of kibbutz living.

Arriving in late 1981 I spent 6 months in the north of Israel on a kibbutz near the Lebanese border and travelled throughout the county. The longer I stayed the more my unease grew about what I was experiencing. The treatment of the Palestinian population exhibited similarities with the treatment of the black population by the white government of South Africa. Given what I knew at the time it did seem that these laws were applied a little more discreetly than in South Africa. However in the past decade or so these discriminatory practices have become much more blatant.

Israel's policies of apartheid policies are demonstrated in a number of ways. The Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law, (2003) does not enable the acquisition of Israeli citizenship or residency by a Palestinian from the West Bank or Gaza Strip through marriage. Palestinian cars have different car registration plates than do the cars of Israelis, in order to allow them to be identified more readily. There also considerable differences in the political rights, voting and representation of the Palestinian population, the existence of differentiated national identification cards, difference in land tenure laws and access to infrastructure, transport, travel, and movement between Israelis and Palestinians.

The open nature of the apartheid practiced by Israelis is no better exemplified than by the building of the Wall in the occupied West bank. Building on the wall began in the early 2000s and once completed, it will run for approximately 650km inside the West Bank. When completed the wall will de facto annex around 47% of the West bank. So far the fence

construction has already uprooted an estimated 1,023,203 Palestinian olive and citrus trees, and demolished 75 acres of greenhouses and 23 miles of irrigation pipes. It now rests on 15,000 dunums ( 1 dunum – 1000sq m) of confiscated land, and its projection guarantees the confiscation of a further 120-150,000 dunums. The construction of the wall was deemed illegal by the International Court of Justice in the Hague in 2004 who demanded that it be dismantled and the compensation should be paid for the damage resulting from its construction.

The linkages between Israeli policy towards Palestinians and the apartheid practice of South Africa have also been made by those who were best placed to do so and when ANC activists visited Hebron in July 2008 they noted "that the restrictions endured by Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied territories was in some respects worse than that imposed on the black majority under white rule in South Africa" ( Independent, 11 July 2008).

Gerald C



# US watchdog in the Middle East

**To understand Israel's role in the Middle East one needs to understand its long relationship with imperialism.**

This relationship began when the rise of Zionism. Zionism is a political movement founded at the end of the nineteenth century that aimed to solve the problem of anti-Semitism in Europe by establishing a Jewish state in Palestine.

The most important figure in this movement was Theodor Herzl. While the idea of Zionism was not new, it was Herzl who identified that imperialism and Zionism had interests in common. Herzl therefore looked to the European states, and the Ottoman Empire, as the means to establishing an Israeli state. It was however the British Zionist, Chaim Weizmann, who realised at the beginning of World War One that Palestine was going to fall under the influence of Britain.

"A Jewish Palestine," he told British cabinet minister Sir Robert Cecil "would be a safeguard to England, in particular in respect to the Suez Canal."

The Suez Canal was considered the "jugular vein" of the British Empire, and therefore the idea of a client state adjacent to it began to win over British policy-makers. With the conversion of the British navy to oil in 1911 the British had become acutely aware of the importance of oil. As the historian Hugh Thomas noted, "British politicians have seemed to have a feeling about oil supplies comparable to the fear of castration." World War One, where the allies supposedly "floated to victory on a wave of oil," exasperated this fear. The potential oil supplies under Arab lands and the importance of the Suez Canal for the flow of oil, suddenly made the century old Zionist program more relevant. As the British began to seize control of Palestine, they gave their first open support to the Zionist cause with the Balfour Declaration of 1917.

By 1956, two thirds of the traffic through the Suez Canal was oil. This was the background to the 1956 British, French and Israeli invasion of Egypt. However at this point in history the US was replacing Britain as a world power, as well as the dominant power in the Middle East. This shift in power was seen in the changing control of oil, as observed by noted socialist Tony Cliff:

Then [Before the Second World War] Britain controlled 100 percent of Iranian oil and 47.5 percent of Iraqi oil; the US interest was only 23.75 percent in Iraq (equal to France's). Since then the situation has changed radically; in 1959 the US share of all Middle East oil rose to 50 percent, while that of Britain declined to 18 percent (France had 5 percent, the Netherlands 3 percent, others, including local Arab governments, 24 percent).

In 1956 the US had been wary of stronger ties with Israel, as it could weaken relations with its Muslim allies. However the continual rise of Arab nationalism turned Israel from being one



During the Bush administration, from 2001 to 2005, Israel received \$10.5 billion in Foreign Military Financing – the Pentagon's biggest military aid program – and \$6.3 billion in U.S. arms deliveries. The aid figure is larger than the arms transfer figure because it includes financing for major arms agreements for which the equipment has yet to be fully delivered. The most prominent of these deals is a \$4.5 billion sale of 102 Lockheed Martin F-16s to Israel. Obama's 2010 budget proposes \$2.8 billion in military aid for Israel. The bombing of the Iraq's Osirak nuclear reactor in 1981 is an example of services rendered in return for this aid.

among many allies for the US in the region, to being the US's primary ally. Despite the US's efforts, such as in the deployment of marines to Lebanon in 1958, Arab nationalism continued to rise. Pro-western regimes were overthrown in Iraq in 1958 and in Yemen in 1962, and Arab nationalists continued courting Soviet support. As was noted in a declassified National Security Council memorandum of 1958, a "logical corollary" of opposition to radical Arab nationalism "would be to support Israel as the only strong pro-West power left in the Near East."

By 1967, Israel's role had changed from an ally of British, and to some extent French imperialism, to being one of US imperialism. Israel's payoff for seriously weakening Arab nationalism in 1967 was immediate. As Lance Selfa has noted "Between 1967 and 1972, total U.S. aid to Israel jumped from \$6.4 billion per year to \$9.2 billion per year. U.S. loans for Israeli purchases of U.S.-made weapons jumped an average of \$22 million annually in the 1960s to a yearly average of \$445 million between 1970 and 1974. The U.S. Congress even allowed the Pentagon to hand weapons to Israel without expecting any payment." As US House Speaker, John McCormack stated in 1971, "Great Britain, at the height of its struggle with Hitler, never received such a blank check" in US military aid. In fact Israel received 99 percent of its aid from the US after 1967. From this point on Israel acted as an agent of US interests in the Middle East and is politically, economically and militarily supplied and protected by the US. This is not to overlook Israel's own interests as a state, which can sometimes create antagonisms with the US. But these antagonisms are not comparable to

other US allies and have never undermined the fundamental relationship the two states have.

Sam Campbell

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# Remembering Deir Yassin



**O**n April 9th 1948, the Zionist militia's known as the *Lehi* (or the *Stern Gang*) and the *Irgun* crept up on the village of *Deir Yassin*, a town of about 750 Palestinian Arabs 5.5km west of Jerusalem.

It was 4.30 in the morning. By the end of that day, approximately 120 villagers had been killed and the village was all but abandoned.

This was one of the first strikes in a wave of terror known now by the Palestinians only as the *Nakba* (the Disaster), which drove hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their homes in a matter of months.

The so-called British Mandate, which saw Britain control Palestine since 1922 with the purpose of eventually establishing a Jewish

homeland, was about to come to an end and the brand-new United Nations had just passed, in November 1947, the "Partition plan for Palestine" establishing the Jewish state of Israel.

In the last few weeks of the British Mandate, the Jewish leadership decided it was crucial that they seize control of the land that had been allocated to them. They developed "Plan Dalet", which called for the systematic expulsion of Palestinians from the soon-to-be-founded state of Israel. At the heart of the Zionists scheme lay terror on a monumental scale. They would chase the Palestinians out of their own country by creating such a climate of bloodletting and violence that a fever of fear would sweep the land. The execution of this plan ultimately led to more than 700,000 Palestinians fleeing their homes in a series of events known collectively as the *Nakba*, or "The Disaster".

*Deir Yassin* was a strategically insignificant village, which had a non-aggression agreement with neighbouring Jewish villages. It was chosen by two Zionist militias known as 'Lehi' and

'Irgun' as a soft target. One hundred and twenty men from these gangs assaulted the village in the early hours of the morning. The villagers put a valiant defence but were brought down with assistance from the *Palmach* - the commando wing of the semi-official Zionist army (the *Haganah*). In the aftermath of the battle, the militiamen went round houses, lined up families, mostly women and children, inside their houses and simply shot them. Fifteen to 20 of the men were taken to a quarry near the village, put up against the wall and shot. News of the attack quickly spread, sparking a wave of panic amongst the Palestinian population.

On the eve of the UN Partition Plan Resolution of 29 November 1947, according to a formerly secret Israeli intelligence report, there were 219 Arab villages and four Arab, or partly Arab, towns in the areas earmarked for Jewish statehood - with a total Arab population of 342,000. By 1 June, 180 of these villages and towns had been evacuated, with 239,000 Arabs fleeing the areas of the Jewish state. A further 152,000 Arabs, from 70 villages and three towns (*Jaffa*, *Jenin* and *Acre*) had fled their homes in the areas earmarked for Palestinian Arab statehood in the Partition Resolution, and from the Jerusalem area.

*Deir Yassin* is almost unique in that most of it still stands. It now serves as an Israeli mental health centre, walled off and inaccessible to the public - a sad testament to the devastation which occurred there. Most of the Arab villages in modern Israel were not even that lucky, being wiped from the face of the earth and replaced by Jewish settlements or farmland.

*Deir Yassin* is notable not as the largest or the worst atrocity in the history of Palestine, but as the start of a much wider campaign that saw literally hundreds of thousands of people forced to flee their homes. This "disaster" ultimately marked the start of the conflict which still rages today, but had roots going back several decades. This is a legacy of racism; of Zionism. It is upon this legacy which the state of Israel was founded, and on which the Zionist policies of its leaders still rest today.

Kevin Hodder



**Menachem Begin:** A leader of the terrorist *Irgun* militia, prime minister of Israel from 1977 to 1980 and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize.

**Yitzhak Shamir:** Member of the *Lehi* militia (or *Stern Gang*) and prime minister of Israel from 1983 to 1984 and 1986 to 1992.

**Moshe Dayan:** Member of the *Haganah* militia that supported the *Deir Yassin* massacre and Israeli "war hero". He admitted (or boasted) in 1969 that: "There is not one single place built in this country that did not have a former Arab population."

# How Hamas won leadership in Gaza

The rise of Hamas is due to the failure of Arab nationalist and leftist forces to push back imperialism. Throughout the post-war period in the Middle East, socialism or left-wing nationalist ideas were the most popular but they failed because they always sought to substitute a great leader or a band of heroic fighters for the revolutionary movement of the mass of people.

The first idol to fall was Egyptian President Abdel Nasser. A radical nationalist, he formed a united Arab republic with Syria, promised Palestinian liberation and took Suez back from the British. His humiliating defeat at the hands of the Israeli military machine left the Palestinians hopeless until the emergence of the fedayeen (Palestinian guerillas) in the 1960s. Drawing on socialist rhetoric and Mao and Guevara's military theories, the fedayeen captured the imagination of the Arab masses. To take the initiative back, Israel provoked the 1967 war, which smashed the Syrian and Egyptian armies once again. The fedayeen kept fighting though and a victory over the Israeli army in a 12-hour battle in Jordan in 1968 made them heroes throughout the Arab world. Even King Hussein of Jordan, a stooge of the US, was forced to declare, "We are all fedayeen now".

But the popularity of the Palestinian resistance and the fact that Palestinian refugees were a majority in Jordan made King Hussein a very worried man.

Before Hussein's eyes, the seeds of a new society were sprouting and threatening his rule. Jordanian officials watched as goods "For the Palestinian Nation" arrived in Amman [the capital]. Aid from liberation movements such as that in Vietnam flowed into Jordan. In Amman, the guerillas maintained their own military checkpoints, newspapers and office. In November 1968, Hussein's army opened fire on Palestinian offices in Amman and on three refugee camps. Several camp-dwellers were killed but the fedayeen repulsed the attack. Nasser in Egypt refused to condemn Hussein, claiming he could not violate Jordanian 'sovereignty'.

There was a debate within the fedayeen on the role of Arab states. The left argued that the Arab states should be challenged (in the case of Jordan this would mean overthrow). Yasser Arafat's Fatah argued that this would compromise their struggle against Israel. Fatah won, at great cost, as in Black September 1970, Hussein launched a year-long all out war on the Palestinians, at the cost of thousands of lives. A similar story of massacre was repeated in 1982 in Lebanon (where the PLO fled to), with Syria and Israel, supposedly enemies, both acting to crush the threat the Palestinians posed.

The PLO strategy was summed up as the gun and the olive branch – meaning narrowly defined guerilla (and terrorist) actions or negotiations

with the US and Israel. Such a narrowly defined struggle that refused to look for allies in the Arab working class was bound to lose. When the Intifada of 1987 broke out, the PLO had little influence or control over what was a genuine, spontaneous mass outpouring of frustration. Arafat was allowed back by Israel after decades in exile but the role he played since his return is local policeman on behalf of Israel. The Oslo Accords, which offered only servitude, were the end of his political credibility.

Into this vacuum stepped Hamas. Although they are a religious organization and although members of the organization have made wildly contradictory statements that veer between Nazi-style anti-semitism and soft opportunism, they have the leadership of the Palestinian resistance in Gaza, and increasingly, in the West Bank. Socialists always look to the struggle from below. If Hamas have the leadership of this struggle then it's the job of socialists not to smash the movement because we disagree with the leadership but to recognize that they have won that position through being the most effective tool the Palestinians have to resist. If we want to see fundamentalism go, we have to provide better, more effective tools.

Mike Tait

## Hypocrisy at UN racism conference

The recent United Nations Conference on Racism was boycotted by New Zealand, United States, Australia, Canada, Italy, Israel and Germany before the conference had even begun. When the conference started, many other western states also left. The reason given was fear of a "rancorous and unproductive debate", according to our Foreign Minister Murray McCully. The topic that was debated was the racist nature of the Israeli state.

Israel is not an ordinary country. It is an explicitly Jewish state built on Palestinian land. It is a "democracy", only because most Palestinians were driven out in 1948 and those that remain are second-class citizens restricted even from marrying Palestinians from the Occupied Territories for fear Arabs might once again outnumber Jews within Israel.

Even liberals such as former US Jimmy Carter has recognised this, stating Israel's policies are worse than Apartheid South Africa's. In the West Bank, Israel has built a huge wall that divides many Palestinian communities. Palestinians wait for hours at checkpoints, intimidated and humiliated by Israeli soldiers, while Jewish colonists can drive unimpeded on their own roads to the illegal West Bank settlements. Furthermore, these settlements are growing. Palestinian homes are still being destroyed and replaced with homes for Israelis. Israel has

become increasingly brutal in its war with the Palestinians. In December 2008, Israel invaded Gaza and massacred 1400 Palestinians.

While the Palestinians do not have much more than guns, suicide bombs, and ineffective rockets, Israel's military is one of the most high-tech in the world. Israel has Apache helicopters, Merkava tanks and F16 planes, mainly supplied by the US. President Obama's policies have not been much different from Bush's in this regard. This is not because of the power of the Jewish lobby. It is part of a conscious decision of the US Government to arm Israel. The US recognises that by funding Israel, they can keep other nations in the region in check.

The Iranian President Ahmadinejad

Ahmadinejad was accused of hijacking the UN Conference with his own agenda. Socialist Review is no defender of Ahmadinejad's decidedly anti-working class government, nor do we endorse everything he has said about the Holocaust. He uses anti-Semitism to his own advantage. By blaming the Jews for the problems, he can give the unemployed and other discontented people a 'safe' way to channel their rage. He can challenge Israeli power, as he knows that Israel is not strong enough to take out Iran on its own. This allows Ahmadinejad to be seen as anti-imperialist, while avoiding a direct challenge to US imperialism. This is despite the

fact that Iraq and Afghanistan, (which both border Iran) have been invaded by the US and the US has directly threatened to attack Iran numerous times over the past five years.

The Alternative to Walking Out

New Zealand and many other Western Nations should have attended the UN conference. They should be prepared to engage in constructive dialogue. New Zealand should not have to agree with everything that is said at the conference. However, it is time that the West grew up, and realised that criticism of Israel's treatment of Palestinians is not necessarily anti-Semitic. Some of Israel's fiercest critics are Jews, such as Noam Chomsky and Richard Falk. As Mike Marqusee's recently wrote in the Guardian "The Jews of Israel have every right to live safely, to follow (or not) their religious faith, to adhere (or not) to their cultural heritage, to speak Hebrew. What they do not have is the right to continue to dispossess and oppress another people."

We demand that the New Zealand government denounces Israel's repression for what it is. Socialist Review condemns all forms of racism, including anti-semitism. We believe in a one-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict - a democratic, secular state with equal rights for Jews and Palestinians.

Reece Wright

# Disappearing Palestine

***For thirteen centuries Palestine had been universally known as an Arab land. At the beginning of the twentieth century over 90 percent of the people, in what today would be Israel and the occupied territories, were Arab. For 400 years they had lived under Ottoman rule and had established a distinctive regional identity as Palestinians.***

In the late 1800s, a political project known as Zionism arose in response to discrimination and violence against European Jews. Zionists advocated the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine, and aimed to achieve this goal by aligning themselves with European imperialists. In exchange for a state, Zionists would protect the interests of Britain and France in the Middle East. At the end of World War I, the British took control of the area, establishing the British mandate of Palestine. In 1917 the British Balfour Declaration promised Jews a state in Palestine, and for the next three decades Jewish immigration to Palestine increased. At first the influx of small numbers of Zionists into Palestine created no problems. As more and more Zionists arrived the indigenous population became alarmed, eventually leading to escalating waves of violence.

After World War II the fledgling UN, dominated by the victors of the war, recommended partitioning Palestine. Although Jews constituted only one-third of the population and owned less than 7 percent of the land, the 1947 UN Partition Plan recommended ceding 56 percent of Palestinian land to a Jewish state. The indigenous Palestinian majority justifiably rejected this plan.

## Al Nakba

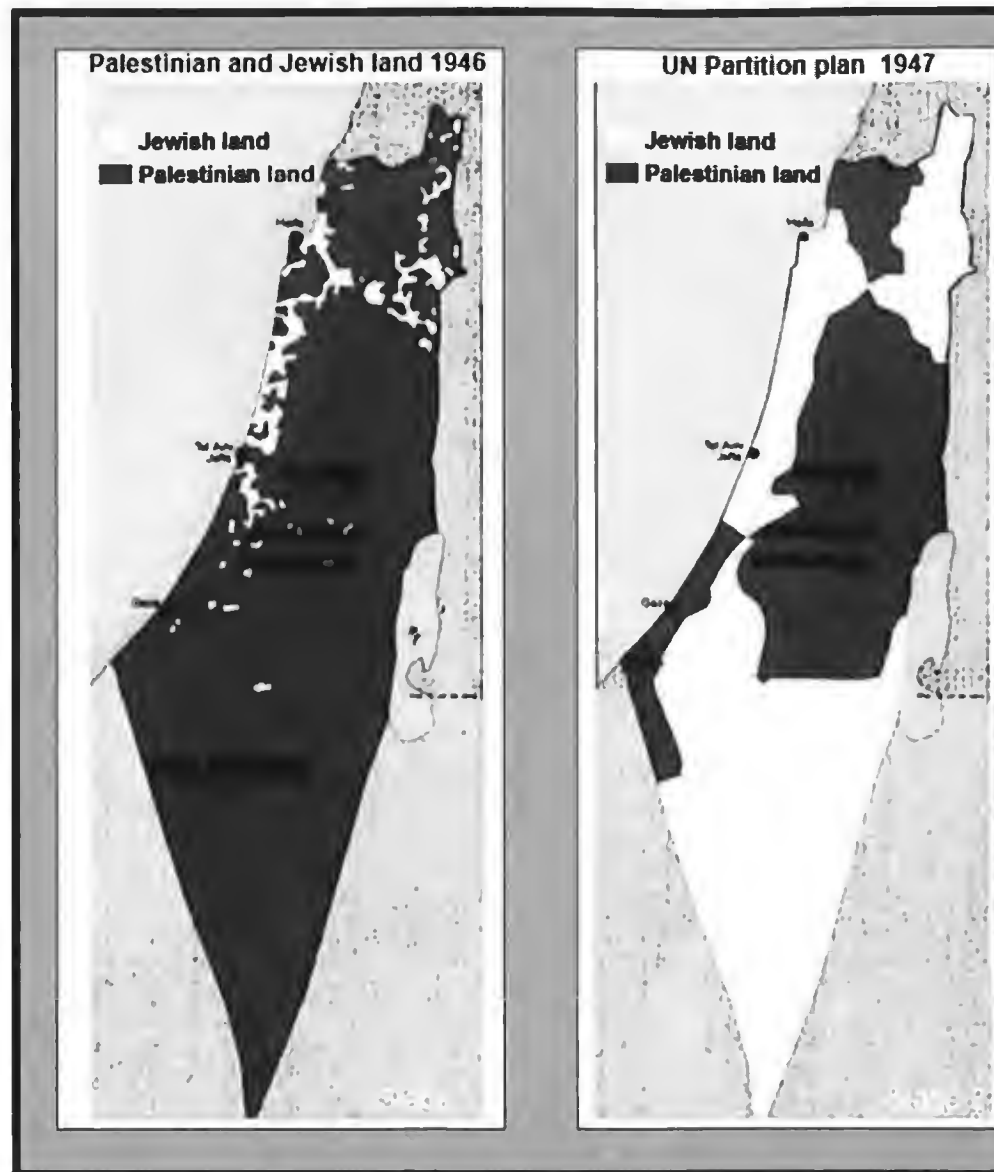
In March 1948, Zionist armed forces began a pre-planned, brutal campaign of ethnic cleansing forcing Palestinians from their land in order to create a Jewish majority. Even before the Israeli declaration of "independence," over 250,000 Palestinians had fled their homes in terror, due to events such as the Deir Yassin massacre. On 15th May 1948 the British Mandate ended and the State of Israel was created. Token armies and volunteers from Egypt, Transjordan (Jordan), Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq joined Palestinians to resist Zionist plans for the conquest of Palestine, but were defeated. Over 720,000 Palestinians were effectively ethnically cleansed from much of Palestine, becoming refugees, and over 400 Palestinian villages were destroyed. The 1949 armistice agreements gave Israel control over 78 percent of the territory of what was left of the

British Mandate of Palestine since Jordan's independence in 1946. Jordan controlled East Jerusalem and the West Bank, while Egypt took temporary control of the coastal plain later known as the Gaza Strip.

## The Slow War of Conquest

Since 1949 Israel has continued to expand its control over historical Palestine. In 1967, Israel invaded the West Bank and Gaza, an area with an

establishment to eventually control all of historical Palestine. As Israeli military and political leader Moshe Dayan, who was considered more sympathetic to the Palestinian plight, once stated, "We have no solution, you shall continue to live like dogs, and whoever wishes may leave, and we will see where this process leads." Other policies have included extensive use of collective punishments such as curfews, house demolitions, and the closure of roads, schools and community institutions.



Arab population of about 1.5 million. This resulted in the dispossession of a further half a million Palestinians. Israel has continued to occupy these territories, despite almost unanimous international objections. For forty years those still residing in Palestine have been living under military rule. Israel has transformed its occupation into one of active colonisation. Israel has confiscated Palestinian resources and tens of thousands of areas of land, building over 200 settlements in the occupied territories and transferring almost 500,000 Israeli citizens into this land. This ethnic flooding is part of a long-term plan by much of the Israeli political

Since 1967, over 300,000 Palestinians have been imprisoned by Israel without trial, and over half a million have been tried in Israeli military courts. Torture has been widely used by Israeli forces and dozens have died in prisons due to abuse and neglect. Any opposition to Israel by Palestinians, be it violent or non-violent, was crushed. In December 1987, a mass uprising against the Israeli occupation began (the Intifada). Israeli forces reacted with force killing 1,300 Palestinians.

Through out the "peace-process" of the last two decades, the Palestinians have frequently been portrayed as uncompromising in the face of

# MIDDLE EAST

Israel diplomatic efforts. In reality the Palestinians have never been offered anything more than the 22% of territory they maintained after 1967. Even this territory has never been offered in its entirety for a Palestinian state. Successive peace accords, have presented a territory with areas annexed, and the West Bank divided into enclaves by Israeli security zones, settlements, and settler/Jewish only road networks. For Palestinian refugees, both those living within the occupied territories and the over four million in neighbouring countries, their right to return to their lands in modern Israel have never even been offered in the peace process.

infrastructure destroyed. In 2004 the International Court of Justice declared the wall illegal. The Eastern Jordan Valley has been declared a closed military zone, while 31 illegal settlements are allowed to operate there freely. If this area is walled off then 500,000 Palestinians in the West Bank will be trapped in enclaves between the wall and the 1967 border, and approximately 55% of the West Bank will be effectively annexed by Israel.

Israeli's unilateral withdrawal of 8,500 settlers from Gaza in 2005 was lauded in the western media as an Israeli peace gesture. What was not often reported was that in the same year, over 14,000 settlers moved into the West Bank. The

## Freedom for Palestine!

The 60-year occupation of Palestine by Israel has been a disaster for the Palestinian people. For decades they have been made to suffer an inhumane, collective punishment in the name of 'peace and security'. In the latest wave of attacks alone, 1,417 Palestinians were killed, including 926 civilians. More than 50,000 were forced to leave their homes and join the 4.25 million Palestinian refugees living around the world. Those that remain are subjected to the daily humiliation of Israeli checkpoints, raids and the constant threat of renewed war.

There is hope, however. Out of the horror of the assault on Gaza last summer, a new international movement for a free Palestine was born. The Palestine Solidarity Network is a group formed in Dunedin to coordinate local activists in the Palestinian cause with others nationally and internationally.

To join,  
phone: 021 254 713  
email: [contact@iso.org.nz](mailto:contact@iso.org.nz)  
or write to:  
Palestine Solidarity Network,  
PO Box 6157,  
Dunedin North.



### Dispossession Continues

Today Palestinians continue to watch the disappearance of their land. In 2002, the Israeli government began construction of the Israeli West-Bank "barrier". This barrier is portrayed as following the 1967 border, but in fact zigzags into the occupied territories, annexing prime land and resources. By 2007 210,000 Palestinians had been isolated from the rest of the West Bank in enclaves; 67 villages had been separated from their farms, crops and other means of livelihood; 83,000 olive trees were uprooted; 30 water wells were confiscated; and 35,000 metres of water

expansion of settlements also continues in occupied Jerusalem, where almost 200,000 settlers live in 12 illegal "neighbourhoods" in East Jerusalem. The EU has accused Israel of using settlement expansion, house demolitions, discriminatory housing policies and the West Bank wall as a way of "actively pursuing the illegal annexation" of East Jerusalem. The wall will not only isolate over 230,000 Palestinian's from the rest of the West Bank, but will also make a farce of the peace processes intention of establishing East Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian state.

Sam Campbell



# The Coup and Colonialism

**The coup in Fiji is the latest sign of serious instability in the Pacific. From Timor Leste to Tonga, poverty has gone hand in hand with mounting political crises. New Zealand politicians talk about development and democracy but the bottom line is economic control.**

There were two coups in Fiji in 1987 and an attempted coup in 2000. Fiji has been condemned by New Zealand and Australia and suspended from the Pacific Islands Forum and lost European subsidies for its sugar can industries. Amnesty International has said the regime has created a climate of fear by media controls and attacks on the judiciary. The regime has said that it aims to hold elections by 2014 but only after it has established the framework for an electoral system that is not race-based.

Fiji's main political divide is between Melanesian Fijians, many of whom live traditional tribal lifestyles, and Indian Fijians, who are descended from indentured plantation labourers. Traditional chiefs still hold significant authority as most land is still tribally owned but business and the professions are dominated by Indo-Fijians.

Earlier coups aimed to shore up the declining power of the chiefs by appealing to anti-Indian feeling. Bainimarama, by contrast, aims to bridge the ethnic divide and create a stable environment for business investment. The government he overthrew was ethno-nationalist and the immediate spark for the coup was a law that would extend tribal control of the seabed and foreshore, threatening the property rights of foreign-owned beachside hotels.

Like all Pacific Islands, Fiji is in a poor position economically, with an estimated 40 per cent of the population living in poverty. New Zealand and Australia may give aid, but the value of the market to Aussie and Kiwi exporters is worth a lot more. The New Zealand Pacific Business Council has been opposed to sanctions against Fiji for fear of losing a \$500 million market to China or Korea. By contrast, Fiji exports only \$39 million worth to New Zealand. Australian businesses have \$2 billion worth of investments in Fiji.

## Economic problems

The problems facing Fiji are serious. The international economic crisis is having a devastating impact, regardless of problems caused by the coup. In April, the World Socialist Web Site reported on the dire impact of a 20 per cent devaluation of the currency. Petrol and kerosene increased 20 percent in price overnight as did imported foods like rice, flour, powdered milk and tinned food.



"In a move estimated to cost 3000 jobs, all civil servants above the age of 55 will be made redundant—except for police and military officers. The government is the country's biggest employer, with over 30,000 workers. The cuts are particularly severe in education, where 787 teachers have been forced into retirement."

"Sugar, previously the largest industry, has already been halved in size and is now on the verge of collapse.

"Over 200,000 people depend on the sugar industry for their livelihood.

"Another former major employer, the garment industry, has been almost eliminated, resulting in high female unemployment rates. Tourism, the biggest source of foreign exchange, is at 40 percent capacity.

It is estimated forty per cent now live in poverty.

Bainimarama's strategy is to build a multi-ethnic Fijian nation that is open to foreign investment. This is better than the ethno-nationalist rhetoric of earlier governments but he is doomed to fail – ethnic divisions cannot be eliminated by government decree and escaping from a subservient position in the world economy requires an international struggle against imperialism not openness to international finance.

Most people would reject the idea that New Zealand is an imperialist power but despite high-flown talk of democracy and development from Wellington and Canberra, control is the main game and Fiji, with a population of just under a million and a central location, is at the heart of the Pacific.

New Zealanders forget that as recently as 1970, Fiji was ruled by Britain, as were many

Pacific islands. New Zealand's sugar, processed mainly by the Chelsea sugar company, came from Fiji and New Zealand troops were sent to Fiji in 1920 to break a strike by cane workers.

Far from being neutral, the New Zealand ruling class has always aligned itself with Western imperialism – first Britain and later the United States. The Land Wars were scarcely over when the first NZ soldiers set off to back the Empire in South Africa. In the last few years, New Zealand troops have been deployed in Iraq, Afghanistan, East Timor, the Solomon Islands and Tonga.

That the Fijian regime has survived so long is due to the increasing power of the China and India in the Pacific. China in particular has increased its development assistance to Fiji considerably, and a Chinese company is building a major hydro-electricity project at Nadarivatu. Fiji is China's second largest trade partner in the South Pacific (after Papua New Guinea) and the regime has openly courted China as a counterweight to Australia and New Zealand.

## Socialist Pacific

Fijian workers and peasants are caught in the vice-grip of third world status – either as an 'untouched' tourist paradise or source of raw materials and cheap labour and the Fijian ruling class is tightly meshed in the web of international rivalries.

Economics is the driving force of New Zealand interest in Fiji, as it is of Chinese interest. If Bainimarama succeeds in throwing off Australian and New Zealand neo-colonial interference he will only replace it with subservience to China.

Workers and peasants in Fiji have to resist foreign control of their resources and country. The only way to do that is through unity, not only of Melanesian and Indo-Fijians, but also of all Pacific Islanders. Fiji's military regime will never lead this resistance.

In New Zealand, we should oppose any foreign intervention by the New Zealand government because our foreign affairs are always dictated by the economic interests of business elites and conditioned by the racism of British colonial institutions. Foreign policy, unlike education or health policy, is not a tool that working people can influence in a positive direction.

If we want to help fight poverty in the Pacific Islands, we have to recognize that their economies are already thoroughly enmeshed into the New Zealand economy. Pasifika workers create profits for NZ bosses whether they are employed in Samoa or NZ and Pacific resources enrich NZ bosses just as mainland New Zealand resources do.

We should fight not just for the right of Pacific Islanders to access health, education and employment in New Zealand. The biggest threat to public health and education and good wages in New Zealand is not overseas workers but our own ruling class.

We advocate open borders and a socialist federation of Pacific states that openly acknowledges our economic interdependence and does not use the language of democracy to hide an exploitative status quo.

Mike Tait



**Strikebreakers:** In 1920 British authorities in Fiji requested help in restoring order during a strike and riots by Indian laborers and sugar cane farmers. Prime Minister William Massey responded by sending 60 soldiers (pictured) as members of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force.

## Defeat sows seeds of future conflict

**For the NZ media, Sri Lanka's brutal 30-year conflict is often depicted as a simple contest: 'Sinhalese Buddhists versus Tamil Hindus'.**

New Zealanders are left with the impression that Sri Lanka is yet another place in the third world, where people are backward and tribalistic, and prone to slaughter each other over trivial matters like ethnicity and religion. In truth, as is the case with many conflicts around the world, the causes are far more complex.

Today, Sinhalese and Tamil communities are known for aggressively asserting their separateness from each other, each with its own history, language and religion. In Sri Lanka, out of a population of over twenty million people, less than one hundred inter-faith marriages have been recorded every year over the last few decades. Yet in the past, Sri Lankan society was more divided along caste distinctions than ethnic or religious lines. Traditionally, Sri Lanka's social and political system has been dominated by land owning castes. Among the Sinhalese, this caste was called the Govigama; the elites among the Govis were the Radhalas, the aristocrats. Among the Tamils in Sri Lanka's

Northern and Eastern provinces, land has been owned for centuries by the elite Vellala caste, and just as the Govigamas in the South had members of lower castes bound to their agricultural estates, the Vellalas were supported by a system of Tamil castes beneath them, who worked their lands.

Members of the Sinhalese and Tamil elite mixed with each other freely and when it came to marriage, caste compatibility was the paramount concern; a Sinhalese aristocrat would sooner marry into a Tamil family of equal caste status, than a Sinhalese family of a lower caste and vice versa.

Sinhalese and Tamil elites continued to enjoy their positions of power and privilege under British rule and traditional caste hierarchies were reaffirmed in colonial systems of administration, where the highest positions were reserved for Govigama and Vellala members. Many of Sri Lanka's politically astute families became highly anglicised, embracing Christianity and sending their children to English speaking private schools.

Upon independence from Britain in 1948, Sri Lanka's elites needed for the first time to garner popular support. They embraced ethnic nationalism. Cultural revivalism had developed already as a vibrant form of resistance against the British imperial regime. After independence, the same ruling elites that enjoyed power

through the period of British rule, quickly adopted Sinhalese and Tamil nationalism; Christians converted to Buddhism and Hinduism, and politicians shed western suits for traditional garb.

The first government of Sri Lanka (then called Ceylon) was a coalition of two deeply nationalist parties, one Sinhalese and the other Tamil. Immediately after independence, the first discriminatory law against Tamils was passed with the enactment of the 'Ceylon Citizenship Act' – with the support of the Tamil party. Over a million Tamils of Indian origin were stripped of citizenship, to appease the demands of Sinhalese chauvinists. It also was aimed at further consolidating the power traditional Sinhalese and Tamil elites as the 'Indian Tamils' who had been brought by the British as indentured labourers to work on tea plantations, were prone to revolutionary Marxist ideas, (which was in fact the case).

Thus, when Tamils were victimised for first time Sri Lanka, it was not the Sri Lankan Tamil Nationalists who stood up for them; instead, their support came from Sri Lankan Marxists, both Sinhalese and Tamil.

In 1956, the 'Sri Lanka Freedom Party' swept to power. Its leader was Solomon Bandaranaike, an Oxford Educated Sinhalese Anglican, who had converted to Buddhism upon his entry into politics. Under this government, Sri Lankan

Tamils were openly discriminated against. The 1956, 'Sinhala Only Act' attacked the position of Tamil elites in Sri Lanka's government and administration, making Sinhalese the sole official language. Sinhalese nationalism became increasingly chauvinistic and in 1958, the first anti-Tamil riots occurred. In the North, and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) were gradually gaining popular support among Sri Lankan Tamils. In 1983, the Tigers launched their first major attack against the Sri Lankan state, ambushing a convoy of soldiers in the Tamil city of Jaffna. Thirteen Sinhalese soldiers were killed and retaliatory riots against Tamil civilians erupted throughout the Sinhalese regions. Thousands of Tamils fled Sri Lanka and many sought refuge in the traditional Tamil regions of the North and East. These refugees provided the Tigers with recruits and the diaspora around the world became a source of funds for secessionist movement. A full-scale war between the Government of Sri Lanka and the Tamil militant group soon became a reality.

In battle, the Tamil Tigers became one of the most successful guerrilla groups in history. They routed government forces from most of Sri Lanka's northeast and established a de-facto Tamil state (called Tamil Eelam), with its own navy, air force, banks, hospitals, schools, even currency. The Tamil Tigers were the first group since World War 2 to use suicide bombing in 1987. In the past, the Government has been unable to defeat the Tamil rebels for several reasons.

Firstly, the Tamil Tigers have enjoyed for the most part, the support of the Sri Lankan Tamil people, who have in the decades after independence been brutalised by Government forces and Government sponsored thugs. In the past the Tigers have been able to blend into the Tamil civilian population.

Secondly, the Tamil Diaspora provided the Tigers with funds to administer their state.

The tide turned for Tigers with the events of 9-11 as country after country began to declare the Tamil Tigers a terrorist organisation. Organisations collecting funds for the Tigers were frozen.

The Government seized the upper hand, and borrowed heavily overseas to rearm. In 2007, a fragile peace was broken. Over a billion US dollars was pumped into Sri Lanka's defence budget and the Government began a brutal campaign of indiscriminate shelling in rebel controlled areas. To ensure that Tamil Tigers did not use the civilian population as a cover, as they had in the past, the Government began rounding up civilians and sending them to displacement camps, located in Government administered "safe zones". International media and aid organisations were almost entirely excluded from access to either the camps or the war zone. As the army pressed forward, the Tamil Tigers tried desperately to organise a cease fire but the Government pressed on amid mounting civilian casualties until, on May 18, the Tamil Tiger Leader Vellipullai Prabhakaran was killed.

So, the de facto Tamil state suffered complete military defeat. Yet thousands of Tamil civilians are still living in camps, as the Government is refusing to release them until any Tamil Tigers



Under the gun: Tens of thousands of ethnic Tamil refugees have been forced to flee their homes by the Sri Lankan Government's onslaught on previously Tamil controlled areas. They are held in Government-run detention camps from which the media and aid agencies have been banned. The latest bloody phase of the Sinhalese-Tamil conflict that has defined Sri Lanka since British colonialism has resulted in a decisive military victory for Sinhalese chauvinism. The triumph of Sinhalese chauvinism will breed resentment that will fuel future conflict.

hiding among them have been detained. According to Tamil Net, a pro rebel website, these refugee camps are effectively government administered "torture and rape camps". Recently three Sinhalese doctors working in one of the camps spoke to the media over their concern for civilians in the "safe zones", who according to them, was still suffering from indiscriminate government shelling. These doctors have since been detained by the Government.

The Tamil Tigers may have been defeated as a conventional military force, but the divisions between Sinhalese and Tamils, which elitist politicians have manipulated in order to secure

their power over the people, still remain. Sri Lanka is a case study as to how ethnic consciousness, throughout history, has been used as a tool of those in power, to prevent the working class from realising its unity. Too long have the people of Sri Lanka been excluded from meaningful political control which has thus far rested in the hands of a few powerful families. Only when Sri Lankan workers realise the extent to which they have been exploited and misled by the ideology of the powerful, will the people of Sri Lanka know the meaning of peace.

Gayaal Idamalgoda

## Campaign for better housing

Substandard flats are a well-known problem, especially in Dunedin. They have been regularly written about in the Otago University Students Association (OUSA) magazine Critic, and are the subject of another yearly OUSA magazine and a Presbyterian Support study titled Old Cold and Costly and the OUSA Stop campaign. Despite it being the focus of so much attention, very little has been done to improve flatting conditions. The official route for grievances – the Tenancy Tribunal – is supposed to be neutral (this in a situation where many houses are so cold they fall below World Health Organisation standards) but in practice often sides with the landlord.

The Student Housing Initiative is an Education Action Group campaign that meets at Otago University every week to organize students around the issue of substandard flats. This campaign group wants to organize, inform and equip students to deal with this basic issue that affects all too many students. We aim to target first years looking for flats about specific landlords and their respective properties. We plan to equip students with the answers they need to ask and the information they need to tell prospective flat hunters.

Our primary campaign is a poster campaign. We want to get the message out to students that if their flats do not meet the Housing Code it is not just their problem – it's a problem they share with students in general and it's a problem that should be solved by landlords. We will hold fortnightly stalls to inform students about the code and assist anyone who needs information about their flat's conditions and we want to be able to inspect flats ourselves in order to assist students.

# Fighting for free education

**Up until 1989, tertiary education was to all intents and purposes free in New Zealand. As long as a student passed their university entrance exams, the small registration fee of a couple of hundred dollars was covered in most cases by the bursary scholarship.**

As well as this, students had easily enough of a stipend to live on without needing to get a part-time job. Without having to juggle study and work or worry about rising rents, students were able to get involved in sports, cultural activities, and activism.

Governments fully funded tertiary education in the post-war era as demand for skilled labour – in private industry and in public health and education – increased. But from the 1970s onwards, as the international economy stagnated, governments everywhere tried to push the cost of social services onto students and working people. This went hand in hand with a pro-business philosophy that aimed to stimulate the economy by cutting taxes and raising unemployment (and lowering wages).

In NZ in 1989, the Labour government claimed that the private benefit of education justified a fixed fee of around \$1200. Compared with nowadays this may not seem much but it was seen by students as the thin end of the wedge and they responded by forming education action groups.

Students were not the only people to feel the brunt of Labour's privatization policies. After six years of pro-business government, New Zealanders were sick of Labour's harsh neo-liberal policies and desperate enough to vote for the National Party's 'decent society'. National never campaigned as a free-market party – they promised to abolish the fixed fee for tertiary students – but once in power they matched the worst moments of Labour's misrule.

Far from abolishing fees, student debt exploded as fees rose year after year. Students were charged interest on their loans before they had even finished their degrees. 'Anticipated' student rolls were funded, as opposed to actual numbers (which were always greater). Students bore the brunt of the shortfall in funding as fees rose and courses became overcrowded.

A new era of student action exploded after the infamous police riot of September 1993. Students had surrounded the registry building, where University Council was meeting to set fees. Unwilling to face up to the justifiably upset students, councillors called in the riot police, who ran rampant over what had been a peaceful protest.

Even though it took years for the courts to condemn the police for using excessive force in 1993, student protest took off up and down the



Dunedin Students protesting outside the National Party office June 2009

country, with marches and occupations everywhere.

That activism continued at high levels until about 1998, when a combination of factors – the upcoming election, disillusionment at National's intransigence and, most importantly, rising workloads and semesterisation led to a decline in protests.

Many students believed a new Labour government would end their misery. These changes in work and living conditions, combined with the change in Government, saw activism collapse.

In 2005, Labour removed interest on student loans. This was hugely important in reducing the unfairness of loans. Students who took longer to finish courses (especially solo mothers and those who have to work part-time) and students who graduated to low-paying jobs ended up paying, through interest, vastly more for their education than students from wealthy backgrounds whose parents paid for fees.

But Labour made this concession while the economy was in recovery and the wealth of the richest New Zealanders was skyrocketing. During Labour's term the National Business Review increased the "Rich List" threshold from \$25 million to \$50 million because there were too many new millionaires.

Under the Labour decade, fees rose seven out of nine years and student debt continued to increase. It now stands at \$11 billion.

The user-pays model now saturates every aspect of universities. Whether buying food in the Union or course readers for exorbitant prices, or even printing for 10 cents a page, students are forced to pay dearly for education. Increases in numbers mean students have fewer resources per capita than a decade ago. Otago University Vice Chancellor David Skegg is over \$1000 per day!

The National Government budget for 2009 had slashed spending for universities if inflation is taken into account. Meanwhile, Australia has increased tertiary funding despite the recession.

## Why free education makes sense

Socialists demand free education because it is important for the development of individuals. It is a right. Everyone should be able to increase their knowledge and skills, not just the rich. What's more, a modern economy cannot run without an educated workforce.

This is especially important now, during the recession. When unemployment increases, people often turn to education to improve their chances of getting work. Unfortunately recessions also make governments look to cut education. If our workforce is not up-skilled, there is no way that it can avoid becoming a low-wage, exploited economy. Businesses do not wish to pay for education, and the government will not tax them for this purpose unless they are pushed into it. Over the last 20 years, the costs of research and development and of education have been increasingly forced onto working people through student loans and taxation.

## Change from Below

While the government sets funding levels, university bosses are not passive victims. Their primary job is to pass as much cost on to students as possible. To reduce fees, we have to campaign for government funding through progressive taxation and against the university bosses who pass on underfunding. In the past almost all universities had groups of students committed to organising protests in defence of student rights – education action groups. Student association executives are kept so busy with bureaucratic affairs they are unable to lead a political fight. It's up to individual students to start education action groups on campus or join existing groups.

Rebuilding these groups should start from small, well-advertised weekly meetings and then move onto small-scale activities like petitions and writing letters to student magazines. While this is less exciting than direct action like university occupations, it's from small things that big things grow.



# Prisons reveal priorities of a sick system

Continued from back page

**While there is a clear link between crime and unemployment, with rates for both peaking in the mid-1990s, the ideology of law and order has created a self-perpetuating cycle, where the failure of imprisonment to increase people's sense of security only feeds demands for harsher sentences and prison conditions.**

The ever-increasing number of prisoners has created a situation where cells designed for one inmate will now be used to house two, increasing the likelihood of violence and rape. The other suggestion from "Corrections" Minister Judith Collins is converting shipping containers into prison cells. This has been rightly denounced by the Howard League for Penal Reform as a "third world tactic". Collins says the scheme would save money and, although per bed the containers would cost less than the normal \$643,000 per bed, at \$380,000 per bed – more than the average cost of an entire house – the shipping containers are still outrageously expensive.

## Racist Justice

Half of all prisoners are Maori although Maori are only 14 per cent of the general population. All over the western world the same picture of racist justice emerges. In Hawaii, native Hawaiians (nine per cent of the population) make up 39 per cent of the prison population; indigenous Australians (three per cent) make up over twenty per cent of the prison population; in Canada, indigenous people (four per cent) make up over twenty per cent of the prison population; in the USA, African-Americans (14 per cent) make up 44 per cent of the prison population. The same trend can be found in Europe. In France, Muslims (who are almost all non-white immigrants) make up 12 per cent of the population but 60-70 per cent of the prison population.

In the face of this profound bias, it is impossible to defend the prison system without being racist.

## Fighting crime – for real

There's a true saying that possession is nine-tenths of the law. The defence of possessions – of property – is the main concern of the entire justice system. In New Zealand, ten per cent of the population owns 50 per cent of the wealth, and half of the population (most likely including readers of Socialist Review) owns less than three

per cent.

This wealth is not just in the form of money and mansions. It is the shops, offices, cinemas, restaurants and workplaces we spend most of our lives in. Our environments are made up of property that belongs to a wealthy elite. What's more, their wealth is all created by the labour of working people – no matter how much they bleat about their brilliance. This is an unnatural state of affairs. As Frederick Engels put it "Capitalism produces crime like a running man produces sweat".

To maintain order, a vast system of control is needed. For most people, these controls are internalized – we recognize the impossibility of

changing the world through shoplifting or breaking the speed limit. Many people – especially young people – require force to be kept in line.

We aim to replace external force with self-policing communities, where there is no need for the bizarre inefficiencies of the present justice system. But self-policing communities are impossible unless those communities really control their workplaces, neighbourhoods and towns. The real thieves are the wealthy few who enrich themselves from the work of others. Until this obscene inequality is ended, then 'justice' and 'corrections' will remain a sick joke.

Mike Tait



## Riot Soldiers overlooking the yard at Mt Eden during the 1965 riot.

By 1945 public calls were being made for the prison to be demolished and in 1951 the government announced in Parliament that this would occur. Demolition plans were postponed in 1953 due to a shortage of funds. The problems at Mt Eden Prison, including a worsening overcrowding problem, were seen as contributing to a prison-wide riot in 1965. Following a failed mass breakout attempt, prisoners lit fires that quickly spread along the roof, fuelled with fat, oil, furniture and prisoners' personal effects. By the time prisoners surrendered 34 hours later, little remained of the prison other than its exterior stone shell. Basements, storerooms, the kitchen, chapel, watch house and 61 cells were among the facilities destroyed. The prison roof also suffered extensive damage. The riot led to further public condemnation of the prison and calls for it to be demolished. Due to a shortage of alternative accommodation, the prison was gradually rebuilt as a temporary measure, but much of it was not restored to its original condition.

Copy: Department of Corrections



# Black death in custody sparks outrage

**"The most racist state in the most racist country in the world."**

No-one in the 1000-plus crowd in Forrest Place, Perth on June 20 was inclined to disagree with this description of Western Australia, where the death in custody of Aboriginal elder Mr Ward has provoked widespread outrage. The protest rally, in pouring rain, was many times larger than most demonstrations in Perth.

Mr Ward had been arrested for drink-driving, and was transported 400km from Laverton to Kalgoorlie in a van operated by private security firm GSL. The temperature outside was 42 degrees, and the metal surfaces inside the van reached 56 degrees. The air-conditioning wasn't working. There were no rest stops and the guards never checked on Mr Ward. He was literally cooked to death and died on Invasion Day 2008, in Kalgoorlie Hospital.

What compounded the tragedy was its predictability. As far back as 2001 the Prison Administrator had reported to the then State

Labor government that "the vehicles are not fit for humans to be transported in. We are just waiting for a death to happen." In October 2006, fourteen Aboriginal prisoners were locked up in a similar van for eight hours in over 40-degree heat after the air-conditioning and the motor both broke down. But to the prison guards, the company, and the Labor government that presided over this sorry incident, Mr Ward was just another black. It is inconceivable that a white person would be treated as he was.

It's sickening that GSL can actually make a profit out of a death in custody, but every detail of the case is utterly enraging. For instance, Graham Powell, one of the guards, had six months earlier been suspended for allowing and participating in racial slurs against prisoners.

The institutional racism responsible for Aboriginal deaths in custody is an integral part of a rotten, divisive system that puts the needs of mining companies and big business above justice and equality for Indigenous people. As a colonial settler state founded on the dispossession and

genocide of Indigenous people, the Australian state is racist to the core. For Aboriginal people, this means that far from the land rights they deserve, the only "rights" they have are to be locked up and killed in custody for trivial offences, to have a uranium mine on their land, to die 20 years earlier than other Australians, and to suffer from Third World diseases - all the while being blamed by government and media for their plight.

This occurs under both Labor and Liberal governments. WA's Labor in opposition has now opportunistically called for compensation for Mr Ward's family, something that even the Liberal law-and-order fanatic Attorney-General can contemplate. But shamefully, not one Labor MP attended the demonstration.

Dennis Eggington of the Aboriginal Legal Service says, "We don't treat animals like that. People get put in jail for treating another creature the same as Mr Ward was treated." Welcome to 21st century Australia, where Aboriginal deaths in custody continue at a disgraceful rate.

Alexis Vassilev

**Far from the land rights they deserve, the only "rights" they have are to be locked up**

## Abu Ghraib in Chicago

**Bob Quellos, of Socialist Worker (US), details the allegations in a Justice Department report on conditions at Chicago's Cook County Jail.**

A REPORT released this month detailing ongoing human rights abuses against prisoners at Cook County Jail in Chicago reads like a horror story out of Abu Ghraib in Iraq.

The 98-page study, issued by the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice on July 17, comes in the middle of a summer that has already been marked by the escalating pace of killings by the Chicago Police Department.

The report goes so far as to call the jail "unconstitutional" and describes a facility that fails to adequately provide prisoners with proper sanitary conditions, medical and mental health care, suicide prevention and fire safety precautions.

Much of the study details inadequate health care provided by the jail's hospital. For instance, in 2006, one woman died a day after being booked at the jail. The report states, "During intake, she reported a history of heroin addiction, yet staff failed to document her drug use and history of addiction...The next day she was found dead in her cell." The likely cause of death was listed as withdrawal syndrome.

In 2007, a man suffered head trauma during a

seizure, "which was likely caused by his not receiving 11 of his 31 prescribed doses of his anticonvulsant medication," the Justice Department said. Another man had his leg amputated as a result of a bone infection due to inadequate care. Meanwhile, the state's budget for the hospital was cut from \$40 million in 2006 to \$31 million in 2007, eliminating 70 jobs.

The report also details a culture of physical abuse by prison guards. In one incident, a mentally ill man exposed himself to a female officer, and in response, the study says, "he was taken to a clothing room where a group of officers handcuffed him and then proceeded to hit and kick him after he was restrained." The man was eventually sent to an outside hospital with severe head trauma.

Days after the release of the Justice Department report, a video surfaced showing former inmate Noel Padilla handcuffed inside his cell last August. In the video, Padilla is removing items from his cell until the video skips. Suddenly, Padilla is seen on the ground in handcuffs and saying, "He came in swinging on us, man."

The missing video spans the time period of a beating by guards. Describing the incident,

Padilla told a local Chicago news station, "At least eight more officers ran inside, and they just started beating me, stomping me, kicking me, punching me, stomping me, kicking me, punching me."

While many in Chicago were disturbed at the recent finding, Cook County Sheriff Tom Dart had a different view. "For them to come out with criticism and then flavor it with some horribly incendiary language and try to paint this picture that we don't care or we don't know is completely inaccurate and horribly unprofessional," Dart said.

But Justice Department criticism of Cook County Jail isn't new. The Feds have been overseeing the facility for over 25 years as a result of a lawsuit brought on by prison overcrowding. Only four years ago, a grand jury condemned the jail for mass beatings of prisoners—including the use of un-muzzled dogs—in 1999 and the cover-up that followed.

In response to the findings, Human Rights Watch stated, "Beatings, un-muzzled dogs, terrified detainees? Sounds like Abu Ghraib. But in fact, it was in Chicago's Cook County Jail in 1999."

Almost 10 years later, not much has changed.

**At least eight more officers ran inside, and they just started beating me, stomping me, kicking me, punching me, stomping me, kicking me, punching me."**

# Staying on the straight and narrow: Schools biased against gay students

Several Dunedin schools were in the news recently for refusing to allow their students bring same-sex partners to school balls.

The International Socialist Organisation helped organise a rally on June 28 to remember the 1969 Stonewall riots, where gays refused to be intimidated and silenced by the police and to protest the continued discrimination of gays. This is the text of a speech given by Kevin Hodder at that rally.

Forty years ago, nearly to the day, massive demonstrations broke out in the streets of Greenwich Village, New York. Thousands of gay men and women took to the streets, demanding the end to years of police persecution and discrimination, sparking off what was to become the gay liberation movement. They were responding to yet another police raid on the Stonewall Inn, a well known gay bar. Normally the cops burst in, broke a few heads, arrested a few people and then moved on to the next club but on the night of June 27, 1969, the patrons had had enough. They pushed the cops back and the rest is history.

In the years between now and then, gay rights activists have fought hard and won recognition and legal equality across most of the developed world. The struggle has been a long one and the victories begrudgingly wrested from the hands of our rulers.

In New Zealand, it is now illegal to discriminate against people based on their sexuality and Education Review Office legislation states that schools are required to have specific policies in place to address homophobia.

Unfortunately, we're not just here in celebration of these fantastic achievements, but also because it seems some Dunedin schools missed the memo.

A few weeks ago, a friend who attends Otago Girls High School informed me that their year had been told that they were not allowed to bring female partners to their school ball. Needless to say I was shocked – after all, has it not been 16 years since the NZ human rights act outlawed discrimination based on sexuality in NZ. Worse, it didn't take long to discover that a good number of other schools in the city have similar policies. Kings College, Columba College and St Hilda's Collegiate, among others, also do not allow same sex couples to attend school formals together. If there is any flexibility on the issue, it involves getting special dispensation, talking to intimidating and often unsupportive senior teachers, signing forms declaring they are queer and in a committed relationship or, in the worst

cases heard of, required accepting counselling! As if the student were somehow sick! On the other hand, if a female student wanted to take that guy they met at that party last week, no questions asked...

I think we all agree that having different rules for queer and straight students is blatant discrimination.

If a university department organised an event and told their queer students that they couldn't bring their partners, you'd be able to hear the cry of outrage from Christchurch. The lecturer would be fired and the university would be jumping over itself to apologise.

So how is it that our schools, arguably the most formative of experiences for most of us, setting the standard of acceptability for our entire society, can get away with these sorts of homophobic practises without reproach?

I think we're all here today to say that they can not.

Contrary to what right wing pundits say, homophobia is the real sickness in our society.

Opposition to homophobia is a fight that has to be brought back into the open. Since we put Destiny Church in its place a few years back, the vocal homophobic elements have been pretty quiet, but implicit discrimination remains.

It's a fight that is as vital to the lives of every single person - gay or straight. As long as the message that homosexuality is not a sickness has not sunk into our schools, how can we expect it to have sunk into wider society?

But this fight is only part of a much larger struggle.

Socialists see the struggle for equality of all sexualities as part of the same struggle for sexual equality between men and women, both in the workplace and in the home, and the same struggle for racial equality. All have different battlegrounds, with different measures of victory, but each has the same enemy. While the struggles may appear as distinct, the one thing that we all share is our class.

It doesn't take a lot of thinking to recognise that a gay millionaire stockbroker has less in common with any of us here than a nurse striking for better wages or the black woman demanding civil rights in the 1960s.

As socialists, opposing homophobia is not an optional extra. It's not something we do because we feel obligated, or because we merely think it is important. We see it as an absolute necessity, a fundamental requirement for any society based on equality, the same as opposing racism and sexism. Martin Luther King Jr (not a socialist by



The Stonewall riot began on a hot June night after a police raid on the Stonewall Inn, an underground bar in New York. The police intended to bully and harass. Instead they were driven from the area. A struggle that would inspire millions had begun. Wider political events shaped the struggle. The chant "Gay Power" echoed the "Black Power" slogan of black people fighting racism. When the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) formed several weeks later it named itself after the National Liberation Front—the Vietnamese resistance group fighting the US. The GLF called for revolution.

any measure) said "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere" and I think that says it all.

We study the sources of division in society – racism, sexism and homophobia, we examine the origins and the expressions and most importantly, we take the historical understanding to the streets. So we fight alongside the gay rights movements, as we did when Destiny Church wanted to spew their hate in Dunedin, and we're fighting again now. But this is only a small step, and we will need to keep on fighting.

So a huge thanks to Philippa Kearney of the Otago University Students Association and other unnameable persons for their hard work towards today's success. Remembering the courage of the men and women who have fought so hard for the freedoms we enjoy today is important, and so too is remembering what so many of them were fighting for. Not just legal equality, but for a better society completely free of discrimination. If you share this dream, as we do, the ISO is the best way to achieve it.

## FURTHER READING

# Ideas that can change the world

**U**nderstanding the world is the first step towards changing it.

Because we are committed to raising political consciousness, the International Socialists have a wide variety of pamphlets and books available at cost price. We import socialist literature from Australia, the United States, Britain and India and reprint many pamphlets here. Below, we have listed what we have in stock at the moment. If you would like to buy anything, please email [contact@iso.org.nz](mailto:contact@iso.org.nz), phone or text 027 606 9549 or write to PO Box 6157.



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# Recession breeds rebellion in Japan

**The global economic crisis is hurting Japanese workers, but it's not as if their lives were easy to begin with.**

The 1990s, sometimes called the 'lost decade' by commentators, saw economic growth virtually disappear and workers' rights eroded.

Contrary to images of a country full of jobs-for-life and paternalistic corporations, the number of workers with non-permanent, casual or temporary contracts has increased 50 per cent in the last ten years. Add the world economic crisis to the mix, and it's easy to see why so many people are worried for their future.

There are signs that Japan is entering a deep recession. There was an annualised 15.2 per cent contraction in the GDP in the first quarter of this year, a postwar record, following a 14.4 per cent drop in the last quarter of 2008. This led the Japan Times to editorialise that the "economy is rapidly deteriorating in the midst of the global recession." As an export-based economy, Japan is particularly vulnerable to world trends. In another sign of the trouble the system faces, consumer electronic shipments fell last month by 14 per cent. This was the seventh straight month shipments have fallen. In the same month demand for services fell at the fastest pace since

1997. Unemployment, at just over four per cent, looks set to rise sharply.

While we haven't - yet - seen an upsurge of workers' militancy and struggle of the kind that is taking place in Europe, there are signs of discontent stirring amongst working people in Japan. The current LDP-led government, which has been in power for almost the whole post-war period, is extremely unpopular, and many workers and young people show revulsion towards all mainstream politics. After suffering years of attacks on their living standards and conditions from a confident right wing, it may be that Japan's workers are preparing to resist.

One sign of this new discontent has been the growth of the Communist Party. The JCP long ago abandoned any commitment to revolutionary politics, and are closer to New Zealand's Labour Party or Greens than they are to the ideas of Socialist Review, but they talk the language of workers' rights and social solidarity, and this message is resonating with younger workers. The party is recruiting over one thousand new members each month, and the Akahata (Red Flag), its daily paper, has a circulation of over one million. There are more subterranean signs of discontent, too: *The Crab Ship* [published in English as the *Factory Ship*, see below], an obscure piece of left-wing 'proletarian literature' from the 1920s, sold over half a million copies last year (a film version is due later this year),

and a manga comic version of Marx's *Capital* is on the best-seller lists.

Some try to minimise the Communists' growth.

"Young people don't know anything about communism", says academic Daisaburo Hashizume of the Tokyo Institute of Technology, "so it's a kind of fashion." This sort of sneering might reassure conservatives but doesn't do much to explain why this fashion has appeared now. A new party activist, working in a part-time service jobs, better sums up the feelings of many young workers: "I hear many stories about people, especially temp workers, my age who make less and less money for longer working hours and can't even pay their rent."

The Communist Party may not have the answers to the crisis that young workers need, but their growth is a symptom of political problems that show no sign of going away. In February Panasonic announced that it would close over a dozen factories and slash more than 10,000 jobs. Workers, as always, are expected to pay for this crisis. But the Communists' growth and the boom in left-wing literature are signs that many of them are sick of this sort of business as usual.

There will be confrontations to come. Watch this space.

Dougal McNeill

## Revival of a lost classic

*The Factory Ship* (Kanikosen) by Takiji Kobayashi (translated by Frank Motofuji)  
Reviewed by Shomi Yoon

Hard economic times have produced one unexpected boom in Japan: a revival of a lost classic of socialist literature. The recent bestseller amongst youth in Japan is none other than *The Factory Ship* - a novel written by a Marxist almost 80 years ago. Even in my local library all three copies of the novel have a waiting list of 30 - 40 people!

*The Factory Ship* was written in 1929 by Marxist writer Takiji Kobayashi. Kobayashi, who died tragically young after being tortured by the police, was part of the great radicalism of Japan's 1920s. His vivid description of the destitute work conditions on the crab cannery ship and the violence those workers faced is striking a chord with Japan's young workers today - many who roll from one temporary job to another with no hope of stability.

Kobayashi (1903-1933) was deeply committed to the struggle to liberate peasants and workers. In the notes he submitted to his publishers for *The Factory Ship*, he states that:

Capitalism, intending that labour remain unorganized, has ironically created a situation where it has caused it to (almost spontaneously) to organize. I have attempted in this work to show how inexorably capitalism infiltrates the

new territories and colonies to carry out a primitive exploitation and, with the backing of the powers that be and the armed forces as guards, watchmen, and bullies, carries out a never-ending series of brutalities.

His focus on unorganized labour is precisely the appeal for so many young workers today. The worker's lot of daily humiliation and drudgery is captured in detail - from the finger-numbing work of canning the crabs, to the lice, diseases and watery gruel they have to eat while the superintendent and the foreman feast on luxuries.

Kobayashi, in pointing out the potential power of the workers, is also careful to point out the degradation and alienation which exists amongst the crew. In one scene he portrays a fisherman looking through the mist of the Kamchatka Sea at two figures on the deck. Once the fisherman's eyes adjust, you're made to realize that a young factory hand is getting raped by another fisherman. No effort is made to stop the violence by the onlooker, and instead, "[i]n instinctively, he turned away".

If two-thirds of the book covers the fishermen passively accepting the beatings and dangerous conditions of the factory ship, the last third details the growing anger and resentment from the fishermen against the Superintendent. One student quietly attempts to persuade others to fight back: "One man alone can do nothing. It's too risky. But they have less than ten men on their side ... If four hundred men unite, there is

nothing we can't do. Ten against four hundred! ... Join us, those of you who don't want to be murdered!"

It's clear that Kobayashi wants the reader to draw lessons from this novel: organised workers can win! But at the same time, he painstakingly details the ideological barriers and pitfalls that can prevent unity. One such pitfall is the workers' hopes in Japanese imperialism. In the final, tragic, scenes the workers realise too late that the presence of the navy was not for their "protection" as they entered Russian waters, but for the Superintendents.

For his clear critique of Japanese imperialism, and his commitment to working class liberation, Kobayashi was murdered by police on 20 February 2008 - he was declared dead less than six hours after his arrest.

In 1929 he wrote of the need to struggle: "The proletariat cries out that they are utterly opposed to imperialist wars, but I wonder how many workers in Japan really understand why they must protest. Nevertheless, they must be made to understand. This is a matter of utmost urgency".

In today's world as the markets come crashing down, the gap in inequality widens and the ravaging of Iraq continues his call to struggle is just as urgent as it was then as is today. That this classic of our movement is finding a new audience in a new generation is an inspiring sign.

# Oppression behind clashes in China

Protests by the Muslim Uighur minority in the west of China are an explosion of rage against their persecution

Hundreds of people were killed, with hundreds of others injured and arrested, during protests by the Muslim Uighur people in the Xianging region in the west of China this week.

Simmering tensions produced by the Chinese state's long-term oppression of the Uighur people have boiled over.

These are some of the most serious clashes between protesters and authorities since the Tiananmen Square revolt of 1989, which shook the country's rulers.

The 20th anniversary of that rising has just passed, and the Chinese ruling class is still nervous about the threat of mass movements to its rule.

It has launched crackdowns on any opposition, such as the mass protests in Tibet last year.

The Uighur people are ethnically Turkic Muslims and have suffered discrimination for generations.

In 1949, a short-lived break away Uighur state, known as East Turkistan, was conquered by the new Chinese Maoist regime.

There have been a number of risings in

Xianging since then against Chinese rule.

## Domination

The most recent demonstrations have been sparked by the death of two Uighurs at a fight in a factory in the region.

The anger has been fuelled by the continuing repression of Islam, the domination of Chinese in the education system and China's economic plans for Xianging.

These involve seeing the region as a major supplier of oil and other raw materials.

Economic growth has been accompanied by mass immigration by Han Chinese people – the majority ethnic group in China – and unemployment for Muslims.

Until very recently the Uighur people were not allowed to have mosques. The use of the traditional Arabic alphabet is still restricted, particularly in universities.

China has also used the "war on terror" to ramp up its persecution of the Uighur people.

Recent protests have not solely been directed against the state. In some cases there has been communal violence against the Han Chinese population.

John Gittings, a specialist on China, spoke to Socialist Worker about the current situation. He said, "I think the Chinese government is finding it ever more difficult to crush the protests and the feeling behind them."

"In Tibet we saw the first violent demonstrations for years in 2008. This a sign of the Chinese state's refusal to address the issues underlying the unrest and oppression today."

China has seen an increase in struggle in recent years. Economic growth has meant worsening of the lives of millions of workers and peasants.

In 2009 so far there have been 59,000 demonstrations, strikes, protests and road blockades in the country. In 2008 there were over 180,000 such actions.

John said, "These struggles may be something that can spread. It is something to watch closely over the next ten years or so."

China's rulers' continuing exploitation of the mass of the population, and its repression of movements for national liberation and workers and peasants' rights, will only lead to more struggles in the future.

Socialist Worker (UK)

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# LOCK THEM UP

## and throw away the cash

A black and white photograph of a prison building. The image shows a concrete structure with a barred window in the foreground. The background is slightly blurred, showing more of the building and some foliage. The overall tone is somber and institutional.

The incredible cost of imprisonment, which has increased dramatically over the last two decades, reveals the sick priorities of the capitalist system. Unable to find the cash to pay for decent health and education and warm, dry housing for working class New Zealanders, our rulers are happy to waste hundreds of thousands on imprisoning thousands of New Zealanders.

The shipping containers the National Government has proposed using as cut-price, no frills prison cells cost more per bed than the average house! Our incarceration rate, the second highest in the Western world, is an expensive joke. Far from reforming prisoners and providing security, imprisonment drives re-offending and violence.

In 1985, there were 2820 prisoners in NZ. Now, there are around 8000 prisoners and almost 7000 corrections staff and, despite Labour's prison-building spree, the overcrowding crisis

as longer sentencing pushes more people into jail for longer.

Both Labour and National governments have worked relentlessly to push law and order as the biggest threat to decent New Zealanders. Finance Ministers dedicated to slashing public spending on health, education and social welfare have somehow found millions for incarceration - the cost of housing one prisoner is \$248 per day - almost double the student allowance or unemployment benefit per week! Per year, that works out to \$90,747, more than three times the median wage (\$27,924).

At around 190 prisoners per 100,000 population, New Zealand has one of the highest imprisonment rates in the developed world. Of Western countries, only the USA is higher at almost 800 per 100,000. Australia's rate is 126.